SURVIVING CHILDHOOD TRAUMA: FIRST NATIONS NOVELS AND THE INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

by

Jay Lewyn

B.A., University of Northern British Columbia, 2014

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
IN
ENGLISH LITERATURE

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

April 2017

Abstract

Indian Residential Schools were a "central element" in "Canada's Aboriginal policy" for over a century, contributing to what is now referred to as "cultural genocide," the attempted "destruction" of "the political and social institutions" of Aboriginal peoples (Truth and Reconciliation 1). This thesis examines the literary representation of the traumatic effects of residential schools in three Canadian novels by three Aboriginal authors: Robert Arthur Alexie's *Porcupines and China Dolls* (Gwich'in); Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (Cree); and Richard Wagamese's *Indian Horse* (Ojibway). The life journeys of the male protagonists in these novels structure my analysis: their response to trauma in childhood; the destructive behaviors they develop in adulthood; and the processes of healing that conclude the novels. Residential schools severely disrupted the health of interpersonal and communal relations amongst Aboriginal peoples, and interrupted cultural continuity. My research indicates that these two areas of Aboriginal life are central to the healing processes occurring today amongst Aboriginal peoples and their communities. Aboriginal Elders, and the oral traditions they share, are integral to this process. The health of today's Residential School Survivors is crucial as they are the story-telling guides for the future generations. These oral traditions are incorporated into the novels, and inform my cross-cultural analysis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract		ii
Table of Contents		iii
Acknowledgements		iv
Introduction		1
Chapter One	Toward Healing the Legacies of Trauma: Alexie Examines Personal Relations and Communal Cultural Revival in *Porcupines and China Dolls*	14
Chapter Two	Cultural Expression in the Contemporary World: How Highway's Okimasis Brothers Triumph over Childhood Trauma in *Kiss of the Fur Queen*	49
Chapter Three	The Gift of Sight: Oral Traditions and Cultural Survival in Wagamese's *Indian Horse*	94
Conclusion		129
Bibliography		136

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my wife, Lynn Patricia Goertzen, for her love, confidence, and support, to my academic advisor, Dr. Dee Horne, for her guidance and encouragement, and to my committee members Dr. Blanca Schorcht and Dr. Antonia Mills for their most helpful suggestions.

I am also greatly appreciative for the financial assistance I received from the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada, the UNBC Masters Tuition Scholarship, and bursaries from Toronto Dominion and the Simons Foundation.

I wrote this thesis while living in Nanaimo, and I would like to acknowledge Danielle Alphonse at VIU, and the Elders and staff at Shq'apthut (The Gathering Place) for their encouragement and cultural contributions.

In memory of Robert Arthur Alexie (22 July 1957 – 9 June 2014), Richard Wagamese (1955 – 10 March 2017), and Renate Eigenbrod (2 December – 8 May 2014).

Introduction

> [T]he colonial state authorized the implementation of compulsory education in residential schools for First Nations children. Taken by legal force from their families, First Nations children and young teenagers were placed in Christian boarding schools. These schools were the site of extraordinary 'policing operations'…set out to regulate aboriginal children's bodies to the assimilation objectives of colonial dispossession….Such an operation eventuated in the loss of Native languages, the destruction of spiritual and cultural practices, and, with the dissolution of kinship relations, the collapse of a network of emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and physical support. In addition to these regulatory colonial practices of assimilation there [is] the now well-documented use of coercive and violent practices of sexual and physical abuse. (Julia V. Emberley, *Defamiliarizing,* 5)

In *Surviving Childhood Trauma: First Nations Novels and the Indian Residential School* I examine the literary representation of the traumatic legacies of Indian Residential Schools. I first became aware of these destructive legacies while studying Joseph Boyden's novel *Three Day Road* during my undergraduate studies. Boyden's characters, Xavier Bird and Elijah Weesageechak, illustrate the disruptively damaging history of residential schools upon the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. In this thesis, I focus on three novels written by Aboriginal authors representing three First Nations cultures from across Canada: Gwich 'in author Robert Arthur Alexie's *Porcupines and China Dolls*; Cree author Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*; and Ojibway author Richard Wagamese's *Indian Horse*, and I examine how each depicts the legacies of residential schools.

Jace Weaver (Cherokee) describes North American Aboriginal literature as "communitist," a term he devises from the combination of the words 'community' and activism'" (xiii). His term, while inelegant, aptly describes how Alexie, Highway, and Wagamese create characters that actively "participate in the healing of the grief and sense of exile felt by [many] Native communities and the pained individuals in them" (xiii). Daniel

Heath Justice (Cherokee) describes Weaver's concept as the literary expression of "the necessary rituals—spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual, and familial—[needed] to keep the kinship network in balance with itself and the rest of creation" (152).

Each novel in this study explores the potential for healing the trauma resulting from the legacies of Indian Residential Schools. Each male protagonist's life journey reveals the importance of healthy relations, both interpersonal and communal. Cultural continuity is a vital element in the healing process, with Elders performing the role of transmitting cultural knowledge through oral storytelling traditions. The assimilationist agendas of the federally funded, church directed residential schools severely disrupted two interconnected elements of Aboriginal life, namely healthy relations and cultural continuity. The healing journeys depicted in these three novels illustrate the important role Aboriginal Elders perform as cultural educators, and how the health of future generations depends upon the healing potential of residential school survivors so they, as the future Elders, can share their cultural traditions.

Each novel depicts the life of Aboriginal children from early childhood through to middle age. For this reason, the structure of this study follows the three stages of these characters' lives. The first stage involves the child's forced separation from family and community to attend residential school. The children instinctually develop survival mechanisms in response to their new, harsh environments. These mechanisms emerge from their personal strengths in conjunction with opportunities each school environment offers. All three authors depict residential schools as a prison-like environment, and the most traumatizing abuse involves the repeated sexual molestation of the children by adult authority figures. These sexually traumatizing incidents produce a variety of life altering responses in

the children. The second stage examines the unhealthy adult coping strategies the characters adopt in response to their traumatic childhoods. These strategies are unsuccessful, and turn into addictions that threaten the lives of the characters. The third stage depicts the healing processes that enable them to move beyond the coping strategies that are failing them, and help guide them in overcoming their childhood traumas.

The three novels that frame this study also incorporate the oral traditions of the Aboriginal peoples they depict. As a third-generation settler with mixed European ancestry, working cross-culturally with three different Aboriginal cultures located in Canada, it is important that I learn from these oral traditions and that they guide my analysis. Deena Rymhs cites Elaine Jahner's assertion that "American Indian writing need not always be the object of critical inquiry," but "can also generate critical positions" (107). My objective is to draw on oral traditions to inform my thinking.

As well, diverse Indigenous writers have informed my understanding. For example, Thomas King (Cherokee) describes the inclusion of oral traditions into literature as "interfusional,…that part of Native literature which is a blending of oral literature and written literature" ("Godzilla" 41). The three novels that frame my research are not what King would consider to be "complete example[s]" of interfusion, like Harry Robinson's (Okanagan Nation) *Write It on Your Heart* (41). They do not possess, like Robinson's work, "a syntax that encourages readers to read the stories aloud," but Alexie's, Highway's, and Wagamese's novels do exhibit "the patterns, metaphors, and structures as well as the themes and characters [that] come primarily from [the] oral" traditions of the authors' cultures that are depicted in the novels (41-42). The description Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo/Sioux) gives of "tribal literature" provides a cultural context for King's "interfusional" concept:

> Native writers write out of tribal traditions, and into them. They, like oral storytellers, work within a literary tradition that is at base connected to ritual and beyond that to tribal metaphysics or mysticism. What has been experienced over the ages mystically and communally – with individual experiences fitting within that overarching pattern – forms the basis for tribal aesthetics and therefore of tribal literature." (5)

Oral traditions contain the wisdom of the past in the medium of the present. As I will discuss further on, each storyteller carries forth their tribal history, and incorporates their own life experience, and that of their community, in each telling.

Kimberley Blaeser (Ojibway) suggests that "critical methods and voices that seem to arise out of the literature itself" are preferable to "critical approaches" from "Western literary theory" that "attempt to make the literature fit already established [western] genres and categories of meaning" (54). My intended approach is to "work…from within native literature or tradition to discover appropriate tools…to form an appropriate language of critical discourse" with which to examine Aboriginal literature (56). Blaesar highlights the importance of the oral traditions that are part of the novel, and how "[o]ne way to safeguard [the] integrity" of Aboriginal literature is to "assert…a critical voice that comes from within" the "tribal story itself" (61). Heather Macfarlane and Armand Garnet Ruffo read Blaesar's "article" as a warning "that using established critical frameworks to interpret Indigenous texts is an act of colonization" because "mainstream authorities" would be "impos[ing]…meaning…on the marginalized texts" (Macfarlane 67).

I do not directly address theoretical approaches to Aboriginal literature that are formulated from a postcolonial context out of respect for the many Aboriginal critics, scholars and authors who are critical of such an approach. Non-Indigenous academic Debra Dudek acknowledges the value of "postcolonial theory when studying a text by an

Indigenous author," but she suggests that "readers should always begin with the text and…listen to what the text asks of the reader" (90). Alexie's narrator, for example, states: "To understand this story, it is important to know the People and where they came from and what they went through" (4). The narrator then draws directly from the oral tradition of the "Blue People," the literary representation of Alexie's Teetl'it Gwich'in First Nation community.

King, unlike Dudek, is "unwilling to use the term…post-colonial" ("Godzilla" 40). For King the term separates Aboriginal peoples from their "traditions" which continue to exist "in spite of colonization" (40). He argues that the term limits "contemporary" Aboriginal literature to "a construct of oppression," and he chooses instead to use concepts like "interfusional" as "vantage points from which [to] see a particular literary landscape" (40-41). Lee Maracle also "rejects the label of postcolonial frequently being used to discuss Indigenous literature" (Beard 126). She states: "For us…there has been no revolution in this country. We're still colonized. So postcolonialism has no meaning for us whatsoever, which is why it never comes up in discourse between us. We're still fighting classical colonialism" (126). Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, like King and Maracle, also resists the use of the term post-colonial. Smith states:

> There is…amongst indigenous academics, the sneaking suspicion that the fashion of post-colonialism has become a strategy for reinscribing or reauthorizing the privileges of non-indigenous academics because the field of 'post-colonial' discourse has been defined in ways which can still leave out indigenous peoples, our ways of knowing and our current concerns. (25)

Smith urges that theorists "need to be 'decolonized'" (41). From my position as a settler scholar this process of decolonization involves learning about the cultures I am studying:

their way of life prior to colonization; the disruptive effects of colonization; and how Aboriginal communities are responding to this disruption today and moving forward into the future. My thesis incorporates these components of decolonized learning.

Renate Eigenbrod points out that oral traditions, particularly "creation stories,…play a crucial role in spiritual based political and historical identifications of Aboriginal peoples" ("A Necessary Inclusion" 312). She cites Lenore Keeshig-Tobias (Anishinabe) to emphasize her point: "Stories, you see, are not just entertainment. Stories are power. They reflect the deepest, the most intimate perceptions, relationships and attitudes of a people. Stories show how a people, a culture, thinks" (312). Blanca Schorcht, drawing from her analysis of Aboriginal "storytellers," states: "Stories are a way of theorizing the world, how it works, and how we should behave in it" (34). Aboriginal novels interfused with oral traditions "reveal the continuity of ancient oral traditions into a presently written space and time," they "theorize the world of contemporary Native reality," and "provide…answers to real-world kinds of questions" (5). The challenge is how best to interpret these answers. Schorcht refers to Julie Cruikshank's work with "Yukon elders" in Cruikshank's book *Life Lived Like a Story* to clarify this challenge (34). Schorcht posits Cruickshank's "suggest[ion] that…the key" to "interpret[ing]" Aboriginal "stories" is understanding "how the [telling of the] stories" are "connect[ed] to" the life of the storyteller, and their need "to make sense of their lives" (Schorcht 34). The social context of the storyteller is the guide to understanding the significance of the story.

Paula Gunn Allen warns "non-Indian reader[s]" that to understand Aboriginal "stories" they "need…to know where" the stories "come from," how they are "compose[d]," and what the stories "mean" for the community they are created from (1). Allen's warning

highlights the importance of focusing on the oral traditions that are interfused into the novels, as they depict culturally specific knowledge that provides the context from which the novels are constructed. Allen points out that "for Indian People…context is both ritual and historical, contemporary and ancient" (2). She states that Aboriginal storytellers "are contemporary because [they] survive in the face of a brutal holocaust that seeks to wipe [them] out, and [that this] context is as much historical as it is tribal" (2).

The three novels examined in this study share the same historical context: the disruptive legacies of Canadian Indian Residential Schools. Each novel illustrates the responses to these traumatic legacies in ways that are grounded in, and informed by the specific culture that each author comes from and depicts. *Porcupines and China Dolls* tells the story of a rural reserve community. *Kiss of the Fur Queen* follows the lives of two Cree brothers who leave their rural community after being placed in a residential school to live in urban environments. *Indian Horse* is about an Ojibway man who is orphaned in childhood, and eventually finds a new home with his adopted Ojibway community.

Allen accurately observes that "Indian aesthetics are spiritual at base; that is harmony, relationship, balance, and dignity are its informing principles" (11). Maracle addresses the difficulty of this spiritual context from a cross-cultural perspective: "Because the sense of the spiritual is expressed simply the complexity of Native concepts of spirituality are often misunderstood and/or reduced to simplistic interpretations by scholars" ("Memory Serves" 47). The spiritual depictions that occur in the novels of this study are one of the many expressions of the cultural reality of Aboriginal life, rather than as religious occurrences in a Western sense, or as expressions of "magical realism,…fantastic, absurd, or flatly impossible" (Abrams 270).

Prior to initiating my analysis of the oral traditions in the novels of this study I first researched Aboriginal scholar and hereditary chief E. Richard Atleo's (Nuu-chah-nulth) *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview*, and his examination of a few of his peoples' "origin stories" (xi). Atleo begins by informing readers that "*heshook-ish tsawalk*" translates as "everything is one," a "perspective" that "is inclusive of all reality, both physical and metaphysical" (xi). *Heshook-ish tsawalk* encompasses the "beliefs, experiences, and practices" of the Nuu-chah-nulth people from a perspective of "reality [that] is the sum total of existence and includes both the physical universe and the spiritual realm" (135). It is this "theoretical proposition that everything is one" that I incorporate into my analysis of Alexie's, Highway's and Wagamese's novels, that all depictions in the novels are part of the total reality created.

I also draw from Atleo's insightful unraveling of the origin stories of his people. Atleo provides contextual introductions to the origin tales he examines. After translating these tales, he explains the cultural meanings of each story. Atleo's process of context and explanation for each tale have provided me with an approach to analyzing the oral traditions interfused into the novels of this study. Atleo also points out that many details are taken for granted in the telling of an oral legend from within a specific cultural context because of first-hand cultural awareness. An example of this is "if the story takes place at Tsiktakis, it is not necessary to say that it is winter because every [Nuu-chah-nulth] listener understands Tsiktakis to be a winter home" (3). However, Atleo suggests that because English is "a low-context language," meaning it has "been stripped of its original cultural context," the English language has "accrued to itself words…from other languages" (3). When Aboriginal authors write in the English language they often find creative ways to describe details that would

otherwise be taken for granted. An example of this is when an Aboriginal word, or phrase includes an English translation. These inter-cultural details and the works of numerous authors, both Aboriginal and settler, inform this study.

Some of the works that provide a historical context to the history and legacies of the residential schools are: John S. Milloy's *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986*; J.R. Miller's *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools*; and the *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Volume One: Summary: Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*. These works provide supplementary historical records and accounts to my analysis.

Celia Haig-Brown's study of the Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia, *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School*, is a school specific, detailed look at the residential school experience, and highlights the agency of the Aboriginal children who attended this institution. Chief Bev Sellars's (Xat'sull) memoir, *They Called Me Number One: Secrets and Survival at an Indian Residential School*, is a personal account of her struggles with the disruptive legacies of residential school, and offers insights into the challenges the protagonists in Alexie's, Highway's and Wagamese's novels encounter.

Settler scholar Sam McKegney's *Magic Weapons: Aboriginal Writers Remaking Community after Residential School* informs my analysis of Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, particularly his interpretation of Highway's use of oral traditions in the novel, and the portrayal of the Okimasis brothers in the context of the historical legacies of residential schools. I use Basil Johnston's (Ojibway) essay, "Is That All There Is? Tribal Literature," to

better understand Saul's gift of sight in Wagamese's novel. Johnston discusses the importance of the deeper, philosophical perspective of language in his essay, and how this level of understanding is dependent upon the understanding of Ojibway oral traditions.

Jo-Ann Episkenew's (Metis) *Taking Back Our Spirits: Indigenous Literature, Public Policy, and Healing* warns of the dangers of outsider scholars colonizing Aboriginal texts when not considering the cultural context of Aboriginal literature. Episkenew's work also provides insights into the history of governmental policies towards Aboriginal peoples in Canada from an Aboriginal perspective. Settler scholar Renate Eigenbrod's *Travelling Knowledges: Positioning the Im/Migrant Reader of Aboriginal Literatures in Canada* is an extensive survey of the field of Aboriginal literature, and focuses on the responsibilities of non-Aboriginal scholars' studying Aboriginal literature. Eigenbrod concludes her study by emphasizing the importance of being "respectful and fair" as cross-cultural critics, and to "position ourselves" so that we may contribute in the "work towards the elimination of racism in our society" (204-207).

Greg Sarris (Coast Miwok/Pomo) also examines the challenges of cross-cultural communication in *Keeping Slug Woman Alive: A Holistic Approach to American Indian Texts*. He suggests interlocutors be aware of their "positioning," while paying attention to the "questions" that arise from the "tensions" produced during the "dialogue" that exists between the author, "cross-cultural mediator," and the literary critic (91, 130). Sarris sees literary criticism as "a kind of story" that represents this "dialogue," where the critic's analysis is presented with an accompanying expression of how the analysis process "inform[s]" the critic (131).

Throughout this study, story is essential to healing the survivors of residential schools and also facilitates intergenerational and cross-cultural dialogue. Chapter One, "Healing the Legacy of Trauma: Alexie Examines Personal Relations and Communal Cultural Revival in *Porcupines and China Dolls*," examines the nightmares that drive survivors to adopt destructive coping strategies that become life threatening addictions, and the solutions that offer possible healing. The health of personal relationships is key to these solutions, as are the public disclosures of childhood traumas that transform individual pain into a collective story that can be shared and better understood. Another important element of this chapter examines the vital role Elders play in guiding the communal rejuvenation of cultural traditions which unite the community with the land, the spirits of their ancestors, the animals, and to all of life. Lateral abuse is also examined in this chapter, as is the importance of understanding that healing is an ongoing journey.

Chapter two, "Cultural Expression in the Contemporary World: How Highway's Okimasis Brothers Triumph Childhood Trauma in *Kiss of the Fur Queen*," examines the different responses two brothers have towards their residential school experience as they shift from their rural childhood environment to an urban one in adulthood. The oral traditions interfused in the novel are instrumental in interpreting the life of each brother, and their relationship is a central component in the novel, as are their artistic gifts which guide them and assist their healing. The Elders and the Cree myths they share also illustrate the vital role cultural continuity has in the healing process in Aboriginal communities, and how oral traditions are reimagined with each succeeding generation.

In chapter three, "The Gift of Sight: Oral Traditions and Cultural Survival in Wagamese's *Indian Horse*," I examine the importance of early cultural education in

childhood. Saul's healing journey also reveals the importance of survivors recalling their childhood traumas, and how returning to the location of trauma can be instrumental in accessing suppressed memories. Saul's gift of sight connects to his Ojibway oral traditions, and the novel also depicts the racist attitudes of a settler culture that reveal a colonial society willing to permit oppressive institutions like Indian Residential Schools to operate for over a century in Canada.

An obvious limitation of this study is that it is male-centric. It is a study of three novels written by male authors depicting male protagonists that is analyzed by a male graduate student. However, my objective is to add a voice to the growing awareness of the disruptive effects of colonization, and to the possible journeys for healing.

A note on terminology: I most often use the term "Aboriginal" to identify the original inhabitants of North America, but also employ the terms Indigenous, Native, and First Nations when referring to, or quoting from primary and secondary sources.

Before proceeding further, I want to make clear that I am not suggesting that all Indian Residential School survivors' life experiences are like the ones examined in this study. Rupert Ross, in his exploration of Indigenous healing, makes an important point when he emphasizes that there "is no single story among aboriginal communities, just as there is no single story to be told about the families that live within them" (88). It is important to remember Eigenbrod's acknowledgment that "a colonial experience like attending the residential school, although seen by most as something harmful, varied greatly from one individual to the next, including positive views" (Travelling 14). However, Rupert Ross also notes that although "not all children" at Indian Residential Schools "were [sexually]

abused,…just being witness to abuse can be powerfully destructive to children…when there is nothing [they] can do to escape it," and the various forms of abuse that occurred in residential schools were many (102).

Chapter One

Towards Healing the Legacies of Trauma: Alexie Examines Personal Relations and Communal Cultural Revival in *Porcupines and China Dolls*

Robert Arthur Alexie's novel, *Porcupines and China Dolls*, depicts a northern, rural Aboriginal reserve community struggling to heal from the disruptive effects of colonization. Alexie refers to the Aboriginal people in this community as the "Blue People," and alludes to Alexie's Teetl'it Gwich'in First Nation community located in the hamlet of Fort McPherson (Alexie 4). The novel focuses primarily on the traumatic legacies of Indian Residential Schools, particularly the sexual abuse many of the community members experience while attending residential school. Much of the novel takes place during the late 1990s when the enormity of Indian Residential School survivor disclosures of sexual abuse led to legal proceedings that flooded the Canadian judicial system. The Canadian Government responded to "thousands of legal claims made against the federal government and the churches" by negotiating "a settlement agreement among the many parties involved in litigation" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 168-169). These legal negotiations acknowledge one element of the traumatic history of Indian Residential Schools, but do not address the ongoing disruptive legacies that persists in many Aboriginal communities today. The community of Aberdeen, depicted in *Porcupines and China Dolls*, illustrates some of these traumatic disruptions.

The primary source of the trauma depicted in the novel is the "one-hundred-bed hostel" where the children are forced to reside while attending residential school (Alexie 19). In 1920 an amendment to the Indian Act "made it mandatory for every [Indian] child between the ages of seven and fifteen to attend [residential] school (Milloy 70). Any parents

unwilling to release their children to the colonial authorities risked "incarceration" (Episkenew, "Taking," 46). "White" supervisory personnel brought up "from the south" to run the hostel repeatedly sexually molested Aboriginal children inside the Hostel (19). The narrator uses the term 'hostel' to refer to the residential school in Aberdeen. The federal government most often named Indian Residential Schools from "a pinpoint on the map" (Johnston, *Indian Schools Days*, 1). Basil Johnston attended "Spanish Boys' School," named after "a small village…in Northern Ontario" (National Centre xv, *Indian Schools Days*, 1). The church operating the school also decided on the name of the schools as well, and used the names of saints like "St. George's,…St. Anne's,…[and] St. Paul's" (National Centre xiii-xvi). Using the term hostel instead of the official name of the school effectively alludes to the 'hostile' environment of the residential school. The term also locates the site where the abuse occurs, the residential dorms where the children are asleep and most vulnerable. The hostel represents the source of the legacies of trauma that is disrupting the community: the sexual abuse the children experience; and their enforced separation from family and community for extended periods.

Porcupines and China Dolls also addresses the disruptive effects of lateral sexual abuse. Basil Johnston (Ojibway) provides an example of this form of abuse in his foreword to McKegney's *Magic Weapons*: "Within six weeks of being committed to [Indian Residential School], I was sodomized by two fifteen-year-old boys" (xi). Johnston is first sexually abused by his peers, and then regularly sexually abused by adult supervisors. Lateral abuse occurs when a victim assumes the role of abuser, and Johnston's experience of abuse suggests that the two older boys are engaging in this form of lateral abuse. Randy Fred (Tseshaht), in his foreword to Celia Haig-Brown's study, *Resistance and Renewal*, shares

how he "was sexually abused by a student when [he] was six years old, and by a supervisor…when [he] was eight" (21). Fred states that these experiences have "had long-term effects…including alcoholism, the inability to touch people, and an 'I don't care' attitude" (21). Lateral abuse in residential schools, sexual and otherwise, increased the hostile nature of the school environment.

The most explicit trauma illustrated in *Porcupines and China Dolls* is Tom Kinney's sexual assault of James. Qwo-Li Driskill (Cherokee) states "Sexual assault is an explicit act of colonization," and that the "boarding school systems in the United States and Canada are one example of the ways [Aboriginal] sexualities, genders, and spirits have been colonized by the invaders" (223-225) Alexie's decision to focus on the pedophilia in the schools effectively illustrates the traumatic legacies of colonization, and the need for a process of decolonization.

Alexie offers what Helen Hoy describes as "realistic...solutions" to the traumas he depicts (Hoy, "Never Meant," 97). Hoy suggests these solutions are primarily "communal" in nature, rather than "individual" (97). The novel focuses on the central protagonist, James Nathan, as he struggles with the haunting memories of his traumatic childhood, but *Porcupines and China Dolls* is as much about "a communal – and all-too-common – story," as it is about one man's personal struggle with suicide (97). The Elders of the community represent one of these solutions. They guide their community in a process of cultural rejuvenation that addresses the legacies of colonial trauma. However, James's personal journey reveals a more personal component of healing involving the potential intimacy that exists between two people. James's ability to embrace Louise lovingly at the end of the novel

suggests that he is ready to engage in a healthy relationship with a woman, and that their mutual love has the capacity to support their personal healing processes.

Several examples of healthy relationships are evident in the novel. In this chapter, I compare these healthy relationships with James's unhealthy relationships with women. These comparisons reveal how James's childhood trauma prevents him from developing healthy, intimate relationships with women, and consequently limits his capacity to heal. The solutions depicted in *Porcupines and China Dolls* model both communal and individual approaches to healing, and illustrate how these two forms of healing are connected.

For readers to understand the solutions depicted in the novel it is important to appreciate the culture of Alexie's fictional Blue People. The narrator states early on that in order "[t]o understand this story, it is important to know the People and where they came from" (Alexie 4). The "legends and beliefs" at the beginning of the novel are an example of Thomas King's (Cherokee) concept of "interfusional [literature],…that part of Native literature which is a blending of oral literature and written literature" ("Godzilla" 41). These interfusional elements provide valuable insights into the healing processes illustrated in the novel. For example, the Elders reintroduce the cultural traditions using "drums, songs, and funeral practices" that were banned by the "Anglican…missionaries," and this helps the Blue People of Aberdeen regain a sense of pride in their heritage (Alexie 6).

The "legends and beliefs" are an important part of this cultural rebirth (4). The first legend describes the creation of the Blue People: "The Creator took some red soil from one of the valleys in the Blue Mountains and created the Old People from whom all Blue People have descended" (4). This concept of emerging from the soil of the earth highlights the

intimate connection Blue People have with the land their ancestors have lived on for millennia. This relationship with the land is enhanced by the cremation ceremony depicted in the legend: "the People brought their dead to the mountains to be burned" so "that their bodies would return to the land and their souls would continue on to the Old People who still lived in the mountains" (4). Two cremation ceremonies occur in the novel, both of which are important communal healing events that enhance cultural continuity for the Aberdeen community. Clifford E. Trafzer (Huron) points out that "Native American history began before humans, when plants, animals, and places of nature interacted with each other to make the world ready for humans" (66). Creation stories, and other "oral narratives are the cultural foundations of Native people," they "are sacred texts filled with meaning for the past and present" (66). This legend expresses the spiritual connection that exists between the Blue People, their ancestral lands, and the spirits of their ancestors. James and Jake experience healing when they travel upriver to their childhood homes, and connect with the spirits of their families in dream visions. James's nightmares do not haunt him when he is on his ancestral lands, nor does he crave alcohol. The connection James and Jake experience while on their homeland highlights the importance of healthy relations between humanity, the land, and the spirit world. This is an example of King's concept of "All my relations," which involves "the web of kinship" that "extend[s] to…all the animate and inanimate forms that can be seen or imagined" (Introduction ix). This legend signifies the important connection the Blue People have with their lands, and with their ancestors.

This first legend informs readers of the spiritual life of Blue People "before first contact" with Europeans, and creates an awareness of what has been disrupted because of colonization (Alexie 4). This awareness is heightened when the fictional community of

Aberdeen is positioned in the real world: "The Blue People are one of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada's western Northwest Territories" whose "name [is derived] from the fact that they lived in the Blue Mountains [located]…west of the Mackenzie River" (4). *Porcupine and China Dolls* is a work of fiction, but the characters and events illustrated in the novel represent real people dealing with the traumatic legacies of residential schools.

The next legend involves the power of song. After "the Old People" were first created they sang "the Old Songs" that create the plethora of animal life that exists on the land (4). These songs express how Caribou are "revered and respected because they provide food, clothing, shelter, tools and weapons" (4-5). The songs describe how wolves are also "held in high regard" because they "follow…the caribou north each spring to the Arctic Ocean and [guide the caribou] back to the mountains before the winter winds" return, ensuring the survival of the Blue People (5). The caribou and the wolf are significant, within the context of the novel, and further convey King's concept of the "web of kinship" (Introduction ix). The songs express the importance of the interconnectedness of life. Singing is also an important component of the communal gathering that takes place in the novel during both the impromptu and organized community events.

Mary asks Elder Martin "a million questions" about the history of the Blue People during a hunting trip upriver to the traditional lands of the Blue People (173). Martin shares his knowledge of the oral traditions, and afterwards tells the group around the fire that he wants to be cremated so he can "be sent back to the Ol' People" (173). It is Mary's first-time upriver to these lands, and the first-time for James and Jake since the deaths of their families. The land and the stories Martin shares have a healing effect. James and Jake are visited by the spirits of their drowned families, and the conversations during this trip are honest and

supportive. Martin's decision to share his intent to be cremated also ensures the continuance of these traditions.

The Elders decide to exhume Michael Lazarus's remains for cremation, and they need the reverend's permission. During their meeting the Elders share their "traditions, customs and legends" with "Reverend Andy and his wife," two non-Aboriginal community members (214). Reverend Andy's approval and support to exhume Michael signifies a key "step" in "[t]he long journey back to the Old Ways" for the Blue People (214). Reverend Andy and his wife also attend the spontaneous gathering that occurs in Old Pierre and Dora's backyard later that same evening. The reverend, first watches, but then "start[s] moving to the beat," and through "osmosis," joins in the "danc[ing]" (215). Reverend Andy is a healthy example of an Aboriginal ally, and the decision of the Elders to share the oral traditions with the reverend highlights the importance of the legends and beliefs of the Blue People for all community members.

Alexie's use of an omniscient third-person narrative mode enables the narrator to express the thoughts, feelings, and actions of many of the characters that make up the community of Aberdeen. This conveys the complexity of the communal trauma Aberdeen experiences because of the residential school system. However, to appreciate the communal healing processes depicted in *Porcupine and China Dolls* it is important to examine James Nathan's personal journey in detail.

James's childhood trauma begins "August,…1962," when he is six years old, and the Indian Act forces James's parents to surrender him to the hostel supervisors (21). James "enter[s a]…whole new world," and, like all Aboriginal children sent to residential schools

each fall, he is stripped, sheared, showered, and "given new clothes" as part of the destructive cultural erasure/assimilation process practiced in residential schools (23-25). James is then "led to the dorm and…[directed to] a bed [with] a number" on it (24). Residential school supervisors used numbers to identify children, evoking a prison-like atmosphere. Chief Bev Sellars, a Xat'sull Indian Residential School survivor, recalls how the school supervisors used numbers to communicate with the children: "Number 1, come here;…I want these girls in my office, Numbers 3, 14, 72, and 105" (32). This use of numbers indicated how dehumanizing residential schools were, as does the 'cleansing' ritual each child undergoes each fall. The Indian Act separates James from his family, community, and ancestral lands, and places him in an environment designed to destroy his cultural, and personal identity.

This moment of separation is also traumatic for James's parents. They are residential school survivors, and know firsthand the brutal conditions their beloved child will experience. James's parents do not reveal their anguish in front of their son when they are separated, but once they are home they die "slow, painful deaths,…scream[ing]" for "answers" that do not come (Alexie 23). Children are the future, the very hearts of a community, and when they are forcibly removed a vacant hole that cannot be filled remains. This form of intergenerational trauma is highlighted when the narrator reveals the effects upon the community when the first generation of Aboriginal children are sent to residential school: the "parents and grandparents don't know it, but someone or something has ripped out their hearts and thrown them to the ground," and "[t]hey watch as their hearts slowly stop beating" as their children "disappear" from their community (9). One of the most traumatic legacies of residential schools on First Nations communities was the separation of families. The children who attended residential school often lost the ability to speak their own

language, and were prevented from learning their traditional way of life. When these children matured into adults they were could not pass on the codes and responsibilities associated with the familial and communal interrelations of their culture. Residential Schools disrupted the cultural continuity of Aboriginal peoples.

The brutal nature of residential schools is alluded to when the hostel is compared to a prison. When Larry Hunter is charged with vehicular manslaughter for killing Mutt and Jeff he is "ordered to remain in custody" until his "trial" date, and although Larry has "never been in a hostel in his life,…he would have realized jail was almost similar" (260). The narrator also refers to residential schools as "hellholes" (18). This is highlighted by the term "he'll" to infer hell a total of thirty-eight times in a mere five pages (12-16). The term occurs fifteen times in a half page paragraph summarizing life at residential school for a male child:

> Sometime in the next nine years *he'll* learn to read and write the English language. *He'll* learn to say the Lord's Prayer and a million other prayers, hymns and psalms. *He'll* learn to sweep and mop. *He'll* learn to haul water and clean up. *He'll* learn to plant, hoe and harvest potatoes. *He'll* learn to fish, but not hunt. *He'll* learn to cut, haul, split and pack wood. *He'll* make friends with other boys *he'll* never see again. *He'll* watch other children leave and will envy them. *He'll* watch other children die and pity them. *He'll* get used to the fish soup, but not the smell. *He'll* learn how not to get hit, slapped or tweaked but will never forget how it felt. *He'll* learn how to hide his emotions and will rarely smile. *He'll* never laugh. (13, emphasis mine)

The repetitive use of the term, '*he'll*,' to identify the child, suggests how the child is both surrounded by a hellish existence, and embodies hell itself. The children's cultural identity is forcibly replaced. They are turned into starving slaves without the supporting love of family, and the joy of laughter is rare. The threat of punishment is always at hand, they must suppress their emotions, and are often reminded that death is a very real possibility. This

summary of life inside a residential school illustrates how traumatic the experience is, even for children who are not sexually abused.

Death is another traumatic component of the residential schools that has an impact on survivors and Aboriginal communities. Approximately one third of the Aboriginal children attending residential school died: "twenty-four of the thirty-five would return...[but] eleven wouldn't" (7). Historian John S. Milloy confirms this when he notes that while "records do not allow an accurate count" of the high rate of death among Aboriginal children attending residential schools, he suggests there were "hundreds," if not "thousands" of children who died while in the care of these institutions (77). In one school in 1910 the rate of death is "estimated" at "nearly fifty percent" (78). Though the authors of these studies attribute most these deaths to "'disease,'" Milloy clearly establishes that the unhealthy living conditions at the schools are the cause of the high rate of mortality (78). Children who died at the schools were often "buried" near the school without ceremony, or the presence of family members (Alexie 12). These deaths were traumatic for the children who witnessed the tragic end of their peers, and for the families and communities who would never see their beloved children again.

The narrator indicates that the children who survive residential school respond by trying to suppress the "[s]trange things" that "happen to them" (Alexie 12). They try "blocking out everything bad that happens," and "remember only the…few…good things" (12). It is unclear if James succeeds in suppressing some of the more general forms of abuse he experiences during his years at the residential school. The novel focuses on James's personal struggles with the nightmares. Haunted by the images of his sexual abuse, images of

other children being sexually abused, and the traumatic loss of his family, James's traumatic memories often eclipse the other abuses he experiences at the hostel.

When James and Jake are twelve years old both of their families die in separate riverboating accidents. The deaths of James's and Jake's families increases their vulnerability at the hostel because they must remain at the hostel year-round until they are old enough to leave. During the first winter following the deaths of the boys' families Tom Kinney, a white supervisor at the hostel, begins sexually abusing James and Jake. The nightmares that haunt James in adulthood incorporate his memory of the images of his own abuse, that of the other children's, and the tragic death of his family. These images of familial loss and lost innocence morph into interweaving nightmares that produce sensations of grief, pain, and hopeless confusion which torment James, and often shock him into waking consciousness.

James adopts coping strategies to deal with his childhood trauma, and these strategies develop into unhealthy addictions. Gabor Mate, a palliative care physician with extensive experience working with people with addiction defines addiction as "any relapsing behavior that satisfies a short-term craving and persists despite its long-term negative consequences" (256). James's addiction to alcohol and sex provide temporary relief from the pain caused by the memories of his traumatic childhood, but these addictions limit his capacity to engage in healthy relationships with others, and produce a depressed feeling of isolation.

James binge drinks to the point of unconsciousness, and when James is wakened by one of his nightmares he immediately reaches for a beer, and thinks to himself, "*[e]ight hours till closin' time….Fuck it. Can't remember it, can't hurt you*" (Alexie 63). James's addiction to alcohol limits his capacity to experience life, and creates a cyclical pattern that is

repeated daily. James often seeks solace within the temporary sanctuary of "The Saloon,….an Indian bar," where amongst the comfort of others he races the clock, seeking the fog of unconsciousness before closing time (32-33). The saloon offers James a familiar environment where he can binge drink without scrutiny because many of the other saloon guests are engaging in similar behaviors. He checks the clock at thirty-minute intervals while drinking quickly so that he can then either "time-travel…or [go] comatose," and does not "care" which happens first (36-41). While James is in the Saloon he is surrounded by people he knows, but his interaction with others is limited because of his heavy drinking, which enhances his sense of loneliness. Unfortunately, alcohol does not effectively suppress James's nightmares either. He drinks to the point of unconsciousness, but the haunting images of his past still occur, and although James does not always "remember" his nightmares, the effect they have on him is "real" (46).

The first nightmare depicted in detail in the novel occurs when James is at Jake's place after a night of heavy drinking at the saloon. James drinks to the point of unconsciousness while inside the bar, and requires the help of others to walk. James is soon unconscious again when they arrive at Jake's home, and although he is "quiet on the outside," James's nightmares are terrifying him "on the inside" (46). Each time James has a nightmare he re-experiences the traumatic events of his past. He can see the "room" where he was sexually molested as a child (46). He can "smell" the familiar scent of the room, and he even feels his abuser's hand, "Soft, warm, white and hairy," as he is guided "to the bed" where Kinney raped him as a child (46). James tries to escape this nightmare. He screams, "*Oh fuck, lemme out,*" but he remains unconscious, and the horrific experience continues (46).

James thinks of his nightmares as "*Big fuckin' Indian dreams"* that are "*guaranteed to keep*" a person "*in apathy 'n self-pity*," and "*booze*" (105). He does not always remember the details of each nightmare, but the trauma they reproduce continues to affect him when he is shocked awake:

> James opened his eyes. It took him a few seconds to realize he was on Jake's couch. It took him a few more seconds to realize he wasn't breathing. He tried to take a deep breath and almost choked. His head started pounding. "Oh fuck," he said out loud. He fought to control his breathing. (48)

James's nightmares reproduce his childhood traumas, and cause him to struggle with the urge to seek suicide as a way of permanently escaping the memories of his past.

In contrast, the "*dream…vision*" James has while he is upriver at the location of his family home on Blue People traditional land is calming, and aids in his healing process (176). James instinctually tries to stay awake to evade his nightmarish dreams while upriver, but after he falls asleep he is visited in his dream vision by the spirits of his family members, and experiences "a peace he'd never felt in his life" (176-177). These two different types of dreams illustrate the disruptive effects of colonization. James's familial dream vision connects him to the spiritual power of his home land, and represents the Blue People's relationship with their ancestors, two aspects of Aboriginal life that are often disrupted by residential schools. James's nightmares represent the traumatic effects of colonization: the destruction of family; the residential school experience; and the rape of innocence, land, and cultural identity. These horrific images are disjointed, and produce a sense of confusion, pain, and loss, while James's familial dream vision comforts and heals him. The contrast in these two types of dreams suggests the Blue People can begin to heal the traumatic legacies of residential school by embracing their cultural traditions.

The personal relationships illustrated in *Porcupines and China Dolls* also contribute to a better understanding of the healing processes that take place in the community of Aberdeen. Next I examine James's personal relationships with women, and then compare them with the healthier examples depicted in Jake's and Chief David's relationships with their life partners. The comparison of personal relationships highlights the importance of healthy, intimate partnerships, both for the individuals in the relationship, and for their community.

James's relationships with women are primarily sexual in nature. He uses sex to distract himself from his nightmares, and fill the void of loneliness created by his excessive drinking. His addiction to sex is directly connected to his sexual abuse as a child: "40 percent of …men" addicted to sex "were sexually abused as children" (Mate 234). James's understanding of physical intimacy and sex is corrupted when he is sexually molested by Kinney. Mate states that "[b]eing held and cuddle[d] is so important…that [people will] associate love with whatever [offers] warmth and contact" (234). Residential school children are separated from their families and communities, and segregated by gender and age in the school. They are also forced to sleep in individual beds, which is in stark contrast to "the communal beds of home" (Haig-Brown 56). These isolating factors increase the instinctual desire for physical comfort.

James's sexual relations are also casual in nature. He has multiple partners, and the relationships he does have are temporary. The reason that sex addicts are unable to sustain personal relationships is because of their "terror of real intimacy" (Mate 234). Mate cites psychologist Monique Giard, who points out that "[i]n a long term relationship you have to face yourself," and that it is "very scary and potentially very painful to face one's deepest

fears" (234). James craves the physical contact sex provides him, and the temporary distraction sex offers from his childhood trauma, but he ends his relationships because he does not want to experience the "unpleasant emotions" that he fears will inevitably occur in long-term relationships (234).

James's compulsion to have multiple sex partners also seems intended to reaffirm his masculinity. Randy Fred states, "Homosexuality was prevalent in…school" (20). The sexual abuse of male children by male supervisors, and its accompanying lateral abuse, influences the compulsion in some heterosexual men to prove their masculinity through sexual conquests with women. However, James's ability to have sex with multiple partners does not improve his self-esteem. This is evident in his interactions with Karen, the bartender at the saloon. James likes Karen, and he flirts with her, but he does not to pursue her sexually because he feels "she [is] too good for him" (36). James's high regard for Karen also suggests that he is afraid to engage sexually with a woman that he has the potential to care for deeply, as this would disrupt his need to keep his relations with women casual. James's inability to connect intimately with Louise also indicates his low self-esteem, and his fear of intimacy.

Angie Lawrence is one of James's ex-girlfriends. She is also a residential school survivor, and a victim of childhood sexual abuse. They both use sex and alcohol to cope with their childhood traumas. Angie continues to pursue James after their breakup. Her life revolves around the thought of reuniting with James, and she even crawls in his window one night when he is drunk and unconscious, and tries to have sex with him (79-80). James is depicted as a kind and generous man, but another side to his nature is revealed when he refers to Angie as "syphilis" (37-48). James blames Angie for transmitting sexually transmitted

diseases (STD's) to him, but given their mutual practice of unsafe sex with multiple partners it is just as likely that James is responsible for transmitting STD's to her. Given the similarities that exist between James and Angie it is possible that James's resentment towards Angie is symbolic of his own self-loathing. James disregards Angie when he ends their relationship, which is another cruel aspect of his relationship with women, yet when he needs sexual distraction he thinks of "*Angie*" (124-125). James and Angie both suffer from childhood trauma and their unhealthy interactions increase their mutual dis-ease.

James knows he needs to make positive changes in his life. This is evident when he is sitting in the saloon and recognizes that the people surrounding him are "the same people he [has] seen a few hours ago, a few days ago and a few years ago" (39). James closes his eyes in hopes that when he reopens them the room will have changed. It remains the same, and he continues drinking. The following day James is back at the saloon drinking, and as he observes some younger men playing pool he "wonder[s]…if they [know] there [is] more to life than" what Aberdeen offers (53). James is in his forties. He realizes that for decades he has been "drink[ing], work[ing], and party[ing]," and he is ready for change (53).

One of these changes is Brenda Jacobs. Brenda provides James with a safe, convenient alternative to the casual one night stand. She expresses her love for James, but is unsettled by James's reserved response, "Me too" (116). She suggests they move to Yellowknife together to start a new life. She hopes that James will change, and become more emotionally accessible if he leaves Aberdeen. James agrees to the move primarily because he believes that if he stays in Aberdeen he will kill himself (160).

However, once they are in Yellowknife together they are forced to confront the unhealthy nature of their relationship. Brenda is recently divorced, and although she expresses her desire to have a long-term relationship with James, she still loves her husband (263). Brenda and James enjoy watching television, and their sex is satisfying, but they are unable to communicate intimately with each other. This is most evident following James's public disclosure at the three-day healing workshop. Brenda is "surprised by James's disclosure," and is unable "to bring it up" afterwards (220). It is not her responsibility to open the topic for conversation, but she feels she cannot "deal with it," and admits to herself that she "maybe never" will be able to talk about his childhood trauma (220). James needs to "prov[e] to her that he [is] still normal," that his childhood trauma does not "matter," and after watching television they relocate into the bedroom to have sex. Sex for Brenda is also aimed at "proving…that it [does not] matter" to her either (222). Instead of addressing their emotional reality James and Brenda use sex as a distraction. James's philosophy is that a good sex life proves a relationship is healthy: "*Fuck her 'n things get back to normal*" (233). James does respect Brenda. He thinks of using Angie for sex at times, but does not follow through with this impulse because he is with Brenda. However, James loves Louise, and Brenda knows this. They both sense their relationship will not last.

When James decides to leave Aberdeen with Brenda he feels that Louise is "*[t]he only thing keepin'*" him in Aberdeen, but he thinks Louise does not "*care*" about him, and "*never will*" (155). However, he continues to think about Louise while he is in Yellowknife, and realizes leaving Aberdeen with Brenda is a mistake. Jake's presence in the house they rent in Yellowknife initially acts as a buffer, keeping them from addressing their individual concerns, but once Jake moves out James and Brenda must confront the issues that are

bothering them. They try to use sex to regain a sense of normalcy, but when Brenda tries to get James to communicate honestly about their relationship neither of them can state why they are with each other. Their sexual relationship runs its course, and James begins removing himself from Brenda's life. Brenda responds by pressing James about his inability to reciprocate her vocal expressions of love, and she asks James if he ever told Louise he loved her. James confesses he has never said those words to any woman, that he does not know why this is, and he leaves. James is uncomfortable talking about his personal life, especially with Brenda because of the intimacy of their relationship.

James, however, does speak with Brenda about his love for Louise after he and Brenda are no longer in a sexual relationship. James returns to Yellowknife to collect his remaining "belongings," and Brenda asks him to "[s]it down" so they can talk (260). James and Brenda, for the first time, share intimate details about their lives with each other. James is willing to risk the threat of intimacy because there is no threat of a long-term commitment. He has the freedom to leave, and potentially never see Brenda again. His willingness to reciprocate Brenda's openness enables him to admit to her that he stills love Louise: "I think I've always been in love with her" (261). N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa) states, when examining the spoken word, "Language is the means by which words proceed to the formulation of meaning and emotional effect" (14). When James vocally expresses his love for Louise with Brenda he is accessing emotions that are connected to love, and this is an important step in his personal healing journey. James's ability to express love is corrupted when he is sexually molested by Kinney, and is also disrupted when his family drowns. James respects Brenda, and her love for him is genuine. She cares about James, and wants him to be happy. This is evident in her decision to approach Louise to tell her that James still loves her, and that if she

still loves James she should tell him (291-293). James's honest emotional connection with Brenda, and his ability to admit his love for Louise are important steps in his healing process.

James's ability to express his love towards women is further disrupted when he is a young man, and in a relationship with Myra Standing, a married woman. Myra's married status initially satisfies his need for sex without an emotional commitment, but James and Myra fall in love. However, when Myra's husband George learns of his wife's infidelity, and her pregnancy, his violent nature drives Myra to use alcohol as a means of escape. Her death from alcohol poisoning is believed to be a suicide. When Brenda presses James about his inability to express his love in words he realizes he never has, but thinks of the "small hotel room in Helena" where he and Myra would meet (252). Myra's death continues to traumatize James. When he returns to Aberdeen after breaking up with Brenda he goes to the hotel room in Helena and binge drinks to suppress his pain.

James's decision to confront George Standing is an "instinct[ual]" need to process the trauma of Myra's death (270). George hates James for cuckolding him, and purposely hurts James by telling him that Myra was pregnant at the time of her death. This shocking information increases James's sense of guilt, and anger towards George. George also feels guilt about Myra's death, and like James, he uses alcohol to cope with the "demons" that haunt him (256). James wants to "kill" George, but chooses instead to tell George that he knows George molested his own sister, Clara, when she was a child (270-271). This news nearly causes George to have "a…heart attack," and when James persuades George that he can convince Clara to press charges "for child molestation" George chooses to shoot himself in the head rather than face the demons that haunt him (271-274).

George's suicide, like Kinney's, provides a sense of closure for James, and are satisfying on a certain level. These men are no longer able to hurt anyone, and George's slow, painful death is, in a sense, payment for the harm he inflicted on others. However, James also feels a sense of personal guilt for wishing these two men dead. James's anger is not conducive to his healing. James does, however, have a moment of healing during his interaction with George, and this occurs when he tells George that he "loved" Myra, illustrating his ability to express his love openly towards a woman (271). Healing is a process of love, not hate.

The legacy of lateral abuse impacts the community of Aberdeen. James and Louise William are teenagers when they first date, and their love for each other continues after their relationship, but they keep their feelings from each other. Louise's inability to express her love for James stems from lateral sexual abuse. Michael Lazarus, one of Kinney's many sexual victims, rapes Louise on their first date. Kinney corrupts Michael's understanding of sexuality, and this informs Michael's decision to rape Louise. The occurrence of pedophilia in the hostel spreads laterally into the community of Aberdeen, and results in layers of dysfunction and trauma. A poignant example of the extent of this perverse dysfunction resulting from lateral sexual abuse is depicted in Daryl Hunter's attitude towards women. Daryl has "never had a girlfriend and only fuck[s] girls who [are] drunk or passed out and [does not] think there [is] anything wrong with" doing so (86-87). He justifies his actions on the basis that "*[h]alf the men in town*" behave the same way (86-87).

Robert Antone (Haudenosaunee) points out that the "[f]ive hundred years of contact" with European settlers is "riddled with…countless acts of violence towards" Aboriginal people (32). Kinney's sexual assault on Aboriginal children is just one example of this form

of violence. Antone argues that the violence associated with the colonial experience is the source of much of the dysfunction that exists in the expression of Aboriginal masculinity in contemporary society. The lateral sexual abuse depicted in the novel illustrates the dysfunction that exists in the Aboriginal male population of Aberdeen. Lateral sexual abuse can be understood from the point Antone makes about how Aboriginal men all too often "mimic the oppressors they hate, as if this is the only way to be a man" (32). This form of male expression harms the whole community, traumatizing both the victim, and the abuser. Direct violence is immediate, but the guilt associated with abuse also traumatizes. This is evident in the suicides of Michael, George, and even Kinney. Male violence directed towards females also disrupts the health of the intimate partnerships needed to care for and love future generations.

James is not physically violent towards his female partners, but his use of them to satisfy his sexual addiction is selfish and unhealthy, especially when James has unprotected sex with multiple partners. Myra becomes pregnant, and dies as an indirect consequence of her relationship with James. Angie continues to long for James, and this contributes to her inability to move forward in her life. Louise breaks up with James when they are young because he has sex with other women. Although James tries to change when he is with Brenda, his lack of emotional accessibility hurts Brenda. James's sexual addiction harms women.

James's inability to commit to an open and honest relationship also prevents him from facing his childhood trauma and finding healing. In contrast, both Jake and Chief David commit to their long-term relationships with their partners. Jake and Chief David were sexually assaulted by Kinney, and Jake's family drowns the same year as James's family.

Jake and Chief David also use alcohol and sex at one time in their lives to cope with their childhood traumas. Yet Jake's and Chief David's ability to risk the threat of intimacy with their respective partners, and face their deepest personal fears enable them to process their painful pasts. Their healing process then enables them to help support James in his healing process as well. James indicates that he wants to improve his life, and the healthy relationships of his two friends suggest one way to achieve this. No one can heal another person. The decision to change must come from within, but the support that a healthy relationship, particularly the intimate relationship with a life partner, can provide support to enable these changes to occur.

An important element of support is physical presence, being there to listen and care for the other person. When James travels upriver to his childhood home he has an emotional breakthrough. He recognizes the importance of honest communication in a relationship, and he tells himself that, "*in good time,*" he will share with Brenda what he has experienced. James believes he can change, and his belief in himself is an important moment in his healing process. Unfortunately, when James reunites with Brenda they resume their habitual behaviors of distraction: television and sex (187). In contrast, Mary travels with Jake and the other men upriver. Her presence provides support for Jake, and he shares with Mary his experience as it is happening. Jake expresses his vulnerability with Mary. He cries "uncontrollably" in front of her, and allows himself to be comforted by her, afterwards sharing with Mary what he is going through (188-189). Mary listens as Jake expresses himself, and this experience strengthens their relationship.

Genuine communication is an important element in life. It requires both the courage to express oneself, and the compassion to listen and respect what is being shared. Healing

cannot occur when traumas of the past are left unexpressed, or are unacknowledged. Jake and Mary's relationship illustrates the characteristics of genuine communication. An example of this occurs when Jake recognizes Tom Kinney's voice while watching television with Mary. He sees Kinney's name "flash…on the screen," and he realizes that the face with the white hair and full beard on the screen is the man who repeatedly molested him "thirty years" previously at the hostel (99-100). Initially Jake's "memory" of his abuse seems like "nothing more than a dream," but deep down he knows his nightmarish dreams are "real" (100). He tries to suppress his emotions because he fears Mary will "run" away, but Mary remains by his side (101). She comforts him, expresses her love for him, and sits with him quietly when the memories of his abuse cause him to cry uncontrollably. as he relives his traumatic past. When Jake's tears halt, and he can listen, Mary continues to encourage him to talk to her. When he is ready he tells her he "was sexually abused in the hostel" (101). Mary acknowledges the extent of Jake's anguish, and seeks additional assistance because she understands the importance of "not…counsel[ing] anyone she [is] involved with" (101-102). Mary has Jake's aunt, Bertha, join them, despite Jake's resistance. Bertha, a respected community Elder, provides additional support, and this enables Jake to begin processing his childhood trauma. Jake and Mary's relationship is strengthened by this event, and illustrates the importance of their ability to communicate.

Another example of Jake and Mary's healthy relationship occurs when Jake travels with Brenda and James to Yellowknife, and Mary temporarily remains in Aberdeen. Jake and Mary maintain the health of their relationship through the phone by sharing their experiences, and discussing their future. James notices his friend's conversations, "and wonders what married couples talked about" (248). James's inability to develop healthy relationships and

communicate with his female partners illustrates one of the traumatic intergenerational legacies of residential schools. The forcible removal of Aboriginal children from their families and communities to institutional environments aimed at culturally reprogramming them deprived generations of Aboriginal children from experiencing healthy familial relationship dynamics developed over thousands of years in their respective communities. Jake and Mary's ability to maintain a long distance relationship illustrates the importance of genuine communication.

Chief David's and Wanda's ability to speak honestly with one another reveals the health of their marriage. Chief David talks with Wanda about his childhood trauma when he shares his plans to disclose his abuse in public at the three-day healing event led by Bertha. Wanda listens, and supports her husband as they discuss his plans. Then, on the morning of the workshop she gives him "a new pair of moose-skin slippers," which brings "tears…to his eyes" (192). This seemingly simple of act generosity contains an important element of cultural heritage, and represents the healthy bond they share. Chief David responds by thanking Wanda by holding her in his arms and saying, "I love you" (192). Wanda informs her husband that she will be there for him, and he responds, "You always were" (192). The health of Chief David and Wanda's marriage is evident in their ability to express themselves honestly with each other, and in how they lovingly acknowledge each other.

James's relationships with his female partners are unhealthy, in part, because of his inability to express himself honestly. This results in his partners' inability to support him in his healing process. James does communicate honestly with his male friends though, and these personal exchanges provide the support James needs to heal. When Jake first reminds James of their common childhood trauma James is reluctant to admit he too was abused, but

Jake notices James's discomfort, and he keeps a watchful eye on James, calling him, checking up on him, and accompanying James into the hills when James is planning on travelling alone. Jake's healthy relationship with Mary enables him to support his friend. When Jake realizes that James is contemplating suicide Jake confesses to James that he too struggles with suicide, and after a quiet moment Jake says to James, "You're my brother" (150). James responds, "I know" (150). This simple verbal exchange conveys emotional honesty. In their mutual acknowledgment of each other they are also acknowledging the importance of their relationship. Jake is the only person James directly expresses his love to prior to the conclusion of the novel. As the cremation ceremony is concluding James says to Jake, "I love you, *my brother*," and Jake replies, "I love you too" (243). James's ability to express himself to Jake with emotional honesty is essential to his healing process.

James's relationship with Chief David is also important. James openly discloses his abuse for the first time when he is with his friends, Jake and Chief David. Chief David informs Jake that Bertha has told him about Jake's abuse, and James, without "know[ing] why," states, "Happen to me too" (168). Chief David replies, "I was in the room a few months earlier," indicating for the first time with his male friends that he too was molested by Kinney (168). The courage and mutual trust of these three men's friendship helps each of them to heal from their childhood trauma, and this healing spreads outwards, into the community when they publicly disclose their abuse.

Martin Lazarus is another man whose friendship is instrumental in James's healing. Martin is a community Elder, and James's "godparent" (170). James's parents were like a "brother 'n…sister" to Martin, and it "dawn[s] on James" that Martin "was his father,...[n]ot

biologically, but traditionally,...[a]nd…that sometimes that was even stronger and more lasting" (180). Aboriginal familial relationships are not strictly defined by biological lineage.

Martin and James's relationship deepens during their hunting trip upriver at the location of their ancestral home. Martin helps James understand and appreciate his connection to the land and the spirits that dwell there. Martin "look[s] at the river, [the] hills and mountains," and says to James, "this is my church" (172). Their ancestors inhabit this land, a spiritual place that has the capacity to heal and inspire insight.

James's vision during this trip connects him with the spirits of his family, and the experience heals "[y]ears of sorrow, sadness and anguish" (177). James is able to openly acknowledges his abuse at the hostel again, and Martin informs James, Jake, and Chief David that they are "not alone," that he is there to support them (175). Martin senses that James has had a special vision during the night, and tells James, "They'll always be here,…with the Old People" (179). Martin sees the pain James is in, and he tells James that what happened in the past is not his "'fault,'" not his family's either, that the past is "'jus' the way things worked out,'" and "'nothin' [anyone] can do will change that'" (179). Upon hearing these words James is emotionally overcome, and he sinks "to his knees and crie[s and]…scream[s] so loud" his pain "echoe[s] out over the land and disappear[s] into the primordial forest" (179). Martin supports James's healing process, and helps guide him by reminding him of his relationship to the spirituality of their homeland.

Mary also contributes to James's healing process during the hunting trip. Her relationship with Jake eliminates the sexual complication James normally has with women. He cannot communicate honestly with Louise because he is still in love with her. He is

emotionally honest with Brenda, but only after they breakup. With Mary he shares intimate aspects of his life. He tells her about his struggles with "[s]uicide," his love for Louise, and his history of sexual abuse (182-183). Mary's training as a counselor, and the nature of their non-sexual relationship, enables Mary to support, and encourage James to acknowledge the areas of his life that are causing him pain.

Bertha is another woman whose support helps James. She also plays a pivotal role in the healing process of the community as well. She encourages James, Jake, and Chief David to attend the "three-day healing workshop" (157). She is a source of strength when these three men disclose their childhood abuse during the workshop, and she encourages them to proceed with legal action against Tom Kinney. Bertha is a holder of the cultural knowledge of her people. She speaks the Old language, and she uses her knowledge and wisdom to help her people. When Bertha first helps Jake process his childhood trauma she says in the Old language, "*It's finally come. The time has finally come*" (102). Bertha recognizes that her community is ready to address the history of sexual trauma originating from the hostel, and return to the cultural ways of their ancestors (102). Bertha is instrumental in leading her people in their return to the culture and ceremonial traditions of their ancestors.

This communal healing process is initiated, in part, by the tragic deaths of Mutt (Leon) and Jeff. Elders Old Pierre and his wife, Dora are the parents of Leon and Jeff, and they start a fire in their backyard to honour their sons the day of their funeral which they keep lit for several days. Old Pierre and Dora keep "the fire going outside their house…to keep the feeling that the tragedies had brought to the community: the feeling of togetherness, the feeling of family, the feeling of tradition" (214). James first tells Jake and Chief David that

he, too, was molested by Kinney while standing around this fire. The fire is like a beacon, calling out to the community.

After the second night of the workshop the community responds to this beacon of hope. Some Elders are gathered around the fire. Old Pierre is "humming an old chant" to himself, and "the others join…in" (214). Together their "chant[ing]" grows into "a song….[t]hey'd heard…in another time and another place," similar to the way the Indian war song emerges out of the collective spirit of the community during the workshop (214). The song spreads to their "feet" as their voices grow "loud and clear," attracting others from nearby to join them in their prayer "to the heavens" (214-215).

James and Brenda, and numerous others are drawn to the music, and the Reverend Andy is among the many that join in the singing and dancing around the fire. This spontaneous celebratory experience comes to its natural conclusion, and many of the people begin to feel "nervous," as they are unsure of what to do next. This is when Old Chief James "nod[s]" to Old Pierre, and says in the Old language, "It's time," signaling to his friend to bring out the "five drums that he'd made many years" earlier (216). Five male Elders begin to "slowly…beat" these "drums," and they are joined by four female Elders who stand "behind them," and "sing" (216-217). Together the Elders lead their people in songs of prayer in celebration "of hope and new beginnings" (217-218). The Elders are instrumental in the individual and communal healing processes of Aberdeen. Their shared memory of the Old Ways guides the people, and unites them.

The three-day healing workshop Bertha initiates is also a pivotal community experience. One hundred people attend the opening of the workshop. By the end of Chief

David's, Jake's, and James's public disclose of their experiences of abuse, this number doubles. Keavy Martin describes this as "an almost-apolcalyptic battle scene," where three men "become Warriors," and "take…bloody revenge on the 'demons, dreams and nightmares' that have been tormenting them" (48). The narrator summarizes day one of the event:

> [T]hree men…disclosed. They'd talked honestly about a sexual abuse that had occurred thirty years ago. They'd spoken of oral sex and sodomy,...of the shame and the pain of being alone. They'd thought it had happened to only them. They [cursed]…Tom Kinney. They'd spoken of how they turned to drugs and alcohol to hide the shame and the pain,...of how they became sluts to show they were men,…[because they believed] Real men, fucked their brains out,…fucked anything that moved,...lied about the women they fucked and took advantage of them. They'd said they hurt people…big time and apologized,...hop[ing] their children would never have to go through the same thing. They held nothing back. It was time for change. (211)

Keavy Martin states in "Truth, Reconciliation, and Amnesia: Porcupines and China Dolls the Canadian Conscience" that this "cathartic climax" brings the community together in an "epic struggle" that helps "purge" the community "of the hurt that has already claimed [too] many lives" (48). James's, Jake's, and Chief David's private disclosures of abuse helps them in their personal struggles with childhood trauma. However, when they publicly disclose at the workshop their courage inspires "fifty" other survivors to speak "from the heart and soul" about their own traumas on the second day of the workshop, and many others, afterwards, to go "and…battle" their own demons "in the quiet and comfort of their own homes" (Alexie 212). These three men share their personal trauma publicly, and the experience transforms into a communal healing communal that helps them, and other survivors, better understand themselves.

Momaday expresses his thoughts on the importance of storytelling when he says "Man tells stories to understand his experience" (14). The stories of these three men help the community of Aberdeen understand their story. Momaday quotes a statement made by Danish author Isak Dinesen to express the capacity of story to sustain people: "All sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them" (15). The communal story of Aberdeen helps the people better understand their shared past, and this shared understanding helps them to continue their journey of healing.

Cultural continuity is an important element in the communal healing of Aberdeen. When Chief David prepares to disclose at the workshop he "put[s] on his new moose-skin slippers" that Wanda makes for him (Alexie 195). These traditional slippers represent the cultural tradition that he is literally stepping into, and from which he is drawing courage, and love. He also chooses to use a "Talking Stick" that has "been around the Band office for many years," but had been abandoned (195). This stick, "*like so many*" of the Blue People's "*traditions,…[is g]one*," but Chief David is helping to restore them (195). This is evident when Jake begins disclosing only when he has possession of the "Talking Stick" (201). Jake also says "Mussi" when he approaches his Chief, thanking him for his courage and guidance (198). Jake's use of the Old language is a defiance of the colonial agenda to "eliminate" Aboriginal languages in the "process of cultural genocide" (Fred 15). The use of the Old language also signifies the importance of Blue People culture, for language "serve[s] as an expression of and for the transmission of…culture" (Haig-Brown 27). These cultural inclusions support the healing processes of the Blue People by acknowledging their intrinsic value as a people, which is an integral component in decolonization.

Jake also embraces an Aboriginal tradition originating from the "Plains Indians" from "another time" (200). He "stake[s] himself" to the ground, tying "one end of [a] caribou-skin rope" to his "cowboy boot," and the other end "to a stake" that he drives into the ground (200). Jake stakes himself to the ground to indicate he is "prepared to sacrifice himself for his Chief and People,...to do battle and to get it over with" (200). Jake's decision to borrow a neighboring Aboriginal tradition suggests the value of traditions outside their own community, and when one of the workshop participants "scream[s] 'He's gonna stake himself,'" it suggests this tradition is common knowledge (200). Although *Porcupines and China Dolls* focuses on the community of Aberdeen, the important messages of healing are relevant for all Aboriginal communities that share the history of colonialism, particularly the disrupting history of Indian Residential schools.

Another example of cultural continuity portrayed in the novel is Michael's cremation. The inspiration to cremate Michael originates with Bertha when she, and her partner Isaac, visit Michael's grave after the first day of the workshop. Bertha says to Isaac in the Old language, "It's time to send him home" (209). Bertha and Isaac share this idea with the other Elders in the community, and together "[t]hey all agree" to make it happen (213). The Elders understand the importance of community, and that together they can bring about positive change.

The ceremonial exhumation of Michael's remains brings the community together. When they gather in the church in preparation there is a communal sense of exhilaration in the "air" (233). The exhumation feels "sacrilegious,…illegal" even, an expression of rebellion against the church, and, consequently, against the influence of colonialism, and this unites the community in a celebration of their cultural identity (233-235). James leads "over

two hundred people" into the hills to "send Michael home" to join the spirits of their ancestors (235-236). There is "an air of cooperation," a sacred sense of connectedness "not felt since the good old days" (236). The last ceremonial cremation was for Old Chief James's father, Chief Francis, and the community conducted the ceremony without the consent of "the minister" (236-237). This time "Reverend Andy" actively supports the community, and their return to their traditional ways (237).

The cremation ceremony unites the Blue People with their ancestors, the land, the animals, and the fullness of life. The Elders lead the people with the "drum," and "an Old Prayer Song," two sacred cultural traditions (237). They watch as Michael's remains are "slowly consume[d]" by the fire, and "his ashes" are "carr[ied]…into the mountains" by "the wind" (237-238). When the "Old Song…slowly" comes to an "end," the sky clears, and the people "bask" in the sun's "energy" (238). A "calmness" envelops them in "silence," which is broken by "a thousand caribou,…one by one," flowing "over the ridge and onto the flats" (237-238). The people watch, "as their ancestors…have done at least ten thousand times,…the return of the caribou to the Blue Mountains," their ancestral home (238). Old Chief James gives thanks, "The caribou are home again….Mussi" (238). The ceremony unites the people, reminding them of their traditions, and their connection to life.

The Elders guide the ceremony effortlessly, and the people respond naturally. Everyone feasts together as they tell "stories and…joke" with each other (238). When Martin "offer[s] a piece of meat for Michael's long journey back to the Old People" others do the same with no need of explanation, each "in their own time and in their own way" (238-239). The cremation ceremony also inspires "the Elders [to] talk…about the good old days when the caribou stretched as far as the eye could see," and the drumming resumes (239). The

people sing "the Old Songs…for the caribou," and the herd stops momentarily, "as if hypnotized" by the music (239). It is "the first time in fifty years" that the people have interacted with the Caribou in this way (239). The traditional cremation ceremony supports the healing process of the community by supporting cultural continuance, and reminds the people of the sacred unity the have with the land, the animals, and the spirit world.

This sense of unity contrasts harshly with the dysfunction that continues in Aberdeen following the cremation ceremony. The saloon and bootlegging business continues to thrive. The recent deaths, the drumming and singing, the ceremonial feeling of a return to the Old Ways recedes into the background. However, the memories of the cultural events remain. These traditions live within in the spirits of the people, the land, and the animals of the region. When Martin Lazarus dies several months later "six hundred People make the pilgrimage into the Blue Mountains, [to] return…Martin to the land and his soul to the Old People" (290). Over the course of the novel the number of community members attending cultural events increases. Although portions of the community do not participate, and dysfunctional behavior continues in the community, each of these events contribute to the ongoing journey of healing taking place both individually and communally in Aberdeen.

Part of James's healing journey takes place away from his community. He remains sober during his travels and focuses on his artwork as his new, healthier, coping strategy. James also forgoes sexual relations with women during this period in his life. For nearly two years James remains single, and he "feel[s…better then he [has] in years" (298). He no longer has nightmares. His artwork sustains his livelihood, and enables him to purchase a van for Jake, Mary, and their newborn son, "Matthew Joseph Noland," during a visit to Aberdeen (294-295). James is healthy, and his plan is to continue travelling.

The saying "Healin' is a journey – there is no end" is repeated several times in the novel (201). Jake learns this saying from "a Chief up north," and these words become a mantra for James and Jake during their healing processes. James returns to Aberdeen healthy, but this changes when Jake and Mary drown in the river. As Keavy Martin notes, the novel illustrates "the process of healing," but "keeps wounds open," forcing "the characters [to] continue to stumble under the weight of their history" (49). James spirals out of control as Jake and Mary's death reawakens the tragic memories of James's own family's death, and the hellish existence of his nightmarish world returns. James is alone, and the accumulated pain of his life drives him to want to commit suicide. James tries to overcome his past, but his traumas never truly go away. There is no end to the healing process.

Porcupines and China Dolls opens and closes with two mirror-like suicide scenes that depict a man who is alone, and is unable to cope with the traumatic events of his life. Mareike Neuhaus suggests that the novel "is a 280-pages-long flashback that explains what" compels James "to want to end his own life" (136). In both these scenes James "pushe[s] the trigger," and "wait[s] for his ultimate journey to hell" (Alexie 2, 304). Yet the novel does not conclude with James's death. Instead, he hears "the voice of hope" (305). Louise speaks his name, and as they embrace they express their mutual love vocally for the first time. The ending of the novel is ambiguous, and readers must decide on their own interpretation.

Neuhaus notes that "the novel refuses to offer readers a happy ending" because it is unclear whether "James and Louise will indeed succeed in finally putting to rest their 'demons, dreams, and nightmares'" (137). It is also unclear in the conclusion what is a dream and what is real. James struggles to differentiate between dream and reality throughout the novel, and readers also struggle with this as the novel ends. For myself, James and Louise's

loving embrace supports the argument that healthy relationships are important in the healing process. An individual cannot heal another person, but their love and support can help encourage a person in pain to make positive life choices that lead to healing.

Cultural continuity is another important healing message in the novel. For Neuhaus, what is clear in the novel is the "*hope* for transformation, namely, the sense that a re-embracing of traditional ways may hold the key to healing from the historical trauma of residential school" (148). The novel states early on that once a child leaves residential school for good "He has to relearn his language and the ways of his People. His survival depends on it – literally" (Alexie 16). Community Elders recognize that the people of Aberdeen are ready to re-embrace their traditional culture. The Elders guide their community through traditional ceremonies, a healing workshop, and impromptu gatherings where drumming, old songs, and dancing slowly remind the people of their connection to the land, each other, and the spirit of life.

Chapter Two

Cultural Expression in the Contemporary World: How Highway's Okimasis Brothers Triumph over Childhood Trauma in *Kiss of the Fur Queen*

Tomson Highway's novel, *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, depicts two Cree brothers from northern Manitoba struggling to survive their residential school experience. Canadian federal policy forcibly relocates the brothers several hundred miles south of their Cree community of Eemanapiteepitat to sever their familial and cultural connections. Sam McKegney summarizes this government policy in his article, "From Trickster Poetics to Transgressive Politics":

> Canadian residential schools acted as a weapon in a calculated attack on Indigenous cultures, seeking through such now infamous procedures as familial separation, forced speaking of non-Native languages, and propagandist derogation of pre-contact modes of existence and Native spiritual systems to compel its inmates into assimilation. (79-80)

McKegney further explains how the Aboriginal children forced to attend these institutions became "divorced from their traditional cultures," and were then "refused entry into prosperous white Canada through inferior educational practices and racism" (80). This resulted in large portions of Aboriginal peoples, over a time frame involving several generations, being forcibly reduced "to occupy a liminal space characterized by disillusion, identity crisis, and despair" (80).

The lives of Champion, (Jeremiah) and Ooneemeetoo (Gabriel) Okimasis depict these general effects outlined by McKegney; Jeremiah and Gabriel are also victims of repeated sexual abuse by Father Roland Lafleur, the principal of Birch Lake Indian Residential

School. The brothers eventually overcome their process of enforced assimilation and childhood trauma. They accomplish this through the support of their brotherly bond, and their ability to reconnect to their Cree culture as they use the gifts they are born with to collaborate, and express their Cree culture in contemporary theatrical productions outside of their culture. Unfortunately, Gabriel contracts AIDS before he reconnects with Jeremiah, and dies in the prime of his life. However, Gabriel's collaborative work heals his spirit, and prepares him for death. McKegney describes the brother's journey as a "triumph over their traumatic past through hard work, dedication, and spiritual reflection" (*Magic Weapons* 85).

The gifts each brother is born with play a significant role in their development and maturation. Jeremiah's gift is music, and Gabriel has the physical grace of a dancer. These gifts help the brothers survive their traumatic residential school experience by providing them a means of expression, and an element of agency. However, earlier on their gifts also draw the attention of Father Lafleur. He grants the brothers access to their artistic outlets, but his sexual molestation of them corrupts their innocence, and disrupts their brotherly bond.

Jeremiah and Gabriel continue to develop their artistic talents after leaving Birch Lake for good, but as the brothers mature into adulthood they develop coping strategies to deal with their childhood trauma. These strategies are not always healthy, and ultimately fail them. One example of these strategies is Gabriel's addiction to sex, and his unsafe sexual practices which result in his contraction of AIDS. Jeremiah becomes addicted to alcohol. The brothers eventually reunite. They collaborate artistically, and draw from their Cree culture: Jeremiah combines classical piano and Cree traditions while Gabriel combines ballet with Cree dance. Together they evaluate their lives, reconnect with their Cree traditions, and process their childhood trauma. The novel illustrates three aspects of the brothers' lives that

inform this healing process: the Cree oral traditions that influence the brothers' artistic collaborations; the mechanisms and strategies each brother develops in response to his personal childhood trauma; and the dynamic nature of their relationship.

Highway depicts Cree oral traditions and shows how they are an expression of the epistemology of Cree culture. These traditions provide a theoretical lens for a cross-cultural analysis. As mentioned earlier, Thomas King refers to written literature that interweaves Aboriginal oral traditions as "interfusional" literature, the "blending of oral literature and written literature" ("Godzilla" 41). Julia V. Emberley says of this literature: "Indigenous epistemologies play a key role in…transforming the historical, transgenerational, and present-day consequences of the traumatic legacies of residential schooling" (*The Testimonial Uncanny*, 19). The oral traditions Highway interfuses into *The Kiss of the Fur Queen* inform, direct, and shape how readers experience the literary representation of the traumatic legacy of the residential school system.

The narrator informs readers that Cree oral traditions, specifically the act of telling stories to each other, often involves an ever-growing quality of "exaggerat[ion]," that with each passing year these stories become "more outrageous," and that this is how stories become "myth" (Highway, "Kiss," 38). In Highway's essay, "Comparing Mythologies," he locates the act of "mythologiz[ing]," in the Cree context, "exactly halfway…between truth and lie" (Emberley, *The Testimonial Uncanny*, 19-20). Emberley interprets this sense of Highway's understanding of Cree "mythological forms" as an ability to "speak…to the contests [that exist] over meaning that pervaded colonization" (20). The importance of this in terms of "decolonization" is that "epistemologies shape human, and other, social and political kinships" (20). The ongoing creation of myth enables the storyteller to recreate the present

out of the wisdom of the past as he/she guides listeners into the future. The Okimasis brothers rework their Cree oral traditions as they integrate their own life experiences into their theatrical collaborations, and this enables them, as McKegney suggests, to "potentially alter [the] structures of power" that have produced their legacy of trauma (*Magic Weapons* 165). The oral traditions that are interfused into Aboriginal literature are not only entertaining to read, they have the capacity to heal colonial trauma through the act of "reestablishing, while also reenvisioning…Indigenous cultural practices and values" (Emberley, *The Testamonial Uncanny*, 19). Thus Highway interweaves oral and written traditions in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* and sheds light on the residential school system.

The novel opens with Jeremiah and Gabriel's father, Abraham, telling them the story of how he wins the "The World Championship Dog Derby" at the 1951 "Trappers' Festival" in Oopaskooyak, Manitoba (3-12). Abraham is "the King of all the legions of dog-mushers, the champion of the world," and his repeated telling of this victory to his two youngest sons, Champion (Jeremiah) and Ooneemeetoo (Gabriel), has a powerful influence on the boys throughout their lives (11). They cherish the story of their father's victory, and in their own way, they each succeed in accomplishing similar achievements. Inspired, Jeremiah develops his talent for music. He trains relentlessly for "fifteen years" in classical piano, and wins the "Crookshank Memorial Trophy, a launching pad for many a concert artist" (210-215). Gabriel's talent is dance, the beauty and grace of physical motion. He also trains relentlessly, and eventually performs in one-thousand seat theatres around the world as a lead professional dancer in the "Gregory Newman Dance Company" (229). Gabriel even performs as Abraham in fictionalized recreations of his father's winning race while performing in theatrical productions throughout his career.

Abraham's story of winning the dogsled race includes elements of Cree oral traditions. An example of this process is Abraham's mention of a trickster goddess-figure called the Fur Queen in his story of triumph. The novel's title indicates the importance of this trickster figure. The Fur Queen guides Jeremiah and Gabriel on their journey through life. She first sends forth their spirits from the heavenly realm down into the earthly womb of their mother, Mariesis, and as the novel concludes she guides Gabriel's spirit "*by the hand"* as he returns to the heavens (12, 306). The Fur Queen periodically reveals herself when Jeremiah and Gabriel need protection or spiritual awakening. After Abraham dies, and Jeremiah is drunk and stumbling about in the snow amidst a thick fog, he nearly freezes to death. Out of this fog the Fur Queen appears, and she reveals herself: "you're talkin' to Miss Maggie Sees. Miss Maggie-Weesageechak-Nanabush-Coyote-Raven-Glooscap-oh-you-should-hear-the-things-they-call-me-hooneypot-Sees, weaver of dreams, sparker of magic, showgirl from hell'" (233-234). The Fur Queen guides the development of the brothers' individual gifts, their relationship with each other, and their healing.

Highway describes Weesageechak as a "trickster figure who stands at the very centre of Cree mythology and who is as important to Cree culture as Christ is to Western culture" ("On Native Mythology" 23). He uses this trickster figure in his plays, *The Rez Sisters* and *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*. In the introductory notes to these plays he states that Weesageechak is "[e]ssentially a comic, clownish sort of character" that "straddles the consciousness of [humanity] and that of God, the Great Spirit," and "teach[es]…about the nature and the meaning of existence on the planet Earth" (*Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*, 12). The Fur Queen in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* is not as humorous a character as

Highway's earlier theatrical trickster figures, but she is the link between humanity and the heavens, and is instrumental in Gabriel's and Jeremiah's earthly education.

The story of the Cree hero, "the Son of Ayash," is another important Cree oral tradition interfused into the novel (227). Abraham shares this story with his sons as he lies on his death bed. His dying message to his sons comes in the form of the myth about the Son of Ayash:

> My son….The world has become too evil. With these magic weapons, make a new world….So the Son of Ayash took the weapons and, on a magic water snake, journeyed down into the realm of the human soul, where he met evil after….Evil after evil,…the most fearsome among them the man who ate human flesh. (227)

Abraham is warning his sons of the evils they must overcome in their life. The priest places "the host" upon Abraham's tongue immediately after Abraham speaks the words, "the man who ate human flesh," and this infers that the "evil[s]" the brothers must defeat are the disruptive impacts of colonialism, particularly the residential school system and its religious Catholic doctrine (227-228). Abraham knows Jeremiah and Gabriel are "splintering from their subarctic roots" because of these disruptive evils, and he tells them this story to "help steer" them while they are in the hands of "destiny" (193). He reminds them of their gifts, their "magic weapons," and that they will need to use these gifts if they are to overcome this "fearsome" monster (227).

Sam McKegney considers the story of the Son of Ayash to be the "most important Cree tale" in the novel (*Magic Weapons*, 163). He claims it is "the myth that forms" the novel's "spiritual backdrop" (163). McKegney provides a summary of Cree Elder Caroline Dumas's version of the myth, and suggests Dumas's version directly influenced Highway in

his writing of *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (163, 217). Several of McKegney's comparisons between Dumas's version and Highway's novel are worth considering. The Son of Ayash, the hero, takes place at a time when the "world" is "wounded," and Highway's novel illustrates the wounds Cree people experience because of colonialism, particularly the disruptive impact of residential school and its sexual abuse (163). McKegney also points out "the hero's abandonment on an island…clearly resonates with the Okimasis brothers' imposed exile at Birch Lake Residential School" (163-164). The hero in Dumas's version must make his way back to his "mother," and McKegney compares the hero's separation from the "mother" with the brothers' separation from their "essentially female Cree spiritual system" (163-164). The Fur Queen represents this spiritual system in the novel, as is evident in the spiritual birth sequence that concludes Abraham's personal story of triumph. The Fur Queen connects to the "benevolent…grandmother" figure that "assists" the hero by "guid[ing] him through the many obstacles" he encounters on his journey (163-164). An example of this connection is Ojibway Elder "Ann-Adele Ghostrider" (174). Ann-Adele is one of several characters associated with the Fur Queen. She helps prepare Gabriel's death in the traditional manner, and her story about Chachagathoo during the Manitoulan pow wow has a profound influence on both brothers. Jeremiah initially refuses to accept her version of the story, and he responds by drinking himself into unconsciousness to escape the effect her story has upon him. Gabriel, however, accepts her version of events, and the knowledge that good dream power is as strong as the power of bad empowers him.

One significant difference that exists between Dumas's version of the story of the Son of Ayash and Highway's novel is that Abraham tells the story to two sons; *Kiss of the Fur Queen* has two hero protagonists. Highway's decision to have two main characters has

several advantages. Jeremiah and Gabriel respond to the disruption and abuse of the residential school system differently. Jeremiah suppresses the memories of being sexually abused, and Gabriel embraces the effect Father Lafleur's sexual abuse has upon him. Each brother also has his own gift. Jeremiah uses his talent for music to isolate himself from others, and Gabriel uses his physical gifts to attract sexual partners. The brothers' relationship also reveals certain familial intimacies that would be less effective if there was only one protagonist, or if these characters were only friends. The support Jeremiah and Gabriel provide each other during their individual healing journies also illustrates the importance of healthy relationships.

Jeremiah and Gabriel's artistic collaborations begin at an early age. Their combined gifts provide mutual entertainment, but also possess the power to affect the world around them. Highway foreshadows the brothers' future lives when they are playfully creating a piece to honor the caribou. Discussing Jeremiah's forthcoming departure to residential school, his parents watch their two young sons disappear within a flowing mass of migrating caribou. Drawn forth by the power of the children's play "a thousand caribou swirl…around" the boys "like rapids around rocks" (45). Jeremiah helps Gabriel as they climb to the "top of [a] large rock," and with Gabriel held tightly in front, the two brothers survive (46). Both boys shut their eyes tightly to "blot…out" the fearful scene of "jostling, careering, twisting, mangling air" (46). Jeremiah uses Gabriel as a shield to "hide behind," but Gabriel is vulnerable, and he "open[s] his eyes," spreads his arms wide, and "embrace[s the] immense field of energy" (46). Together the brothers call forth a beautiful, yet dangerous element of life. They survive what is at first thought to be "the dreaded Weetigo" (43). The danger the caribou herd represents is comparable to the assimilative and abusive experience the brothers

experienced at residential school, and the urban world of their adulthood. Each brother's response to the caribou threat indicates the way he will face the powerful forces that threaten to crush their lives. Jeremiah chooses the protection of security, to hide and withdraw from the forces that confront him. In contrast, Gabriel embraces these forces, and chooses to merge himself with the danger that threatens to carry him away (43-46). The unifying element between them, aside from being siblings, is their collaborative artistic gifts. Despite their periodic sibling rivalry, Jeremiah and Gabriel's love for one another remains true. They play happily together until Jeremiah is seven, when he attends Birch Lake Indian Residential School.

Residential school separates Jeremiah from his family and community. Abraham informs his son of the concept of distance before he boards the plane, and warns Jeremiah that the "three hundred miles" south to Birch Lake is "too far for a boy of six to walk" (52). Abraham's warning prevents Jeremiah from running away from Birch Lake, and potentially dying like "real-life Chanie 'Charlie' Wenjack" (Boyden, *Wenjack*, 99). Lee Maracle and Joseph Boyden have both written stories about Charlie, a young Aboriginal boy who is lonesome for home, and decides one night to join several older boys as they escape from the residential school. Charlie heads out on his own the second day, intent on walking home, and he freezes to death in the cold winter night. In Maracle's version Charlie follows the "trail…[h]e had marked" out in his mind during the "eight-hour trip" by "rail," the way "his ancestors might have," but Charlie does not understand the difference between travelling by train and by "foot, and he never finds "his first landmark" ("Charlie" 331-332). Charlie's story was covered by "*Maclean's"* soon after Charlie's death, and the "national…expos[ure]" of this horrific occurrence led to "the first public inquiry into

residential schools in Canada" (Boyden, *Wenjack*, 101-102). Residential schools were purposely located far from the children's home communities because of the desire to eliminate familial contact, and thus disrupt cultural continuity for Aboriginal peoples. There were "[h]undreds of children" like Charlie who ran away from residential school to return to their homes despite the risk of severe punishment and possible death (Milloy 143). Historian John Milloy notes that the "frequent punishments," excessive "hard work," substandard living conditions, and the occurrence of sexual abuse produced the high rate of fatalities resulting from Aboriginal children running away from residential schools (132, 142-143, 284-289). The children's desire "to reach their distant homes" indicates the extent of the trauma the children experience from familial separation (143).

Jeremiah's first day at Birch Lake illustrates some of the harsh conditions students experience at residential school. Each fall the nuns and priests initiate children into a process of assimilation that involves the stripping away of the child's Aboriginal identity. Deena Rymhs draws from sociologist Erving Goffman's "study of the psychological effects of 'total institutions'" (103). She uses his term "mortification" to describe the experience of initiation that aims to eliminate the children's "former means of self-identification" (103). Jeremiah is mortified when his hair is shaved off upon entry into the school. His hair has never been cut, and he compares the experience to "being skinned alive, in public" (Highway, *Kiss*, 53). Celia Haig-Brown notes how "[h]ead shaving" was a "severe" form of abuse, particularly because of the "traditional associations" that connected the child's hair with their cultural identity (84).

Brother Stumbo dehumanizes Jeremiah by shearing him like a sheep. He uses simple "body language" because Jeremiah does not speak English, and the school personnel do not

speak the languages of their students (51-52). Haig-Brown points out that "school personnel were serving both as teachers and as surrogate families to children from another culture," yet possess no "special awareness" of the children's culture to ease any "potentially upsetting situations" (68). To make matters worse most children were unfamiliar with the language used at the school, and the priests and nuns often punish the children with a "strap" when there were caught speaking "their own language" in an effort to communicate (Milloy 143). Thus, Aboriginal languages "became useless and even despised" by "many children" (Haig-Brown 48). Jeremiah remains silent as his beloved hair is removed, refusing to cry for fear of ridicule from the other children (Highway, "*Kiss*," 51-52).

Jeremiah's resiliency, however, is pushed beyond his coping threshold when he is ordered to speak his name. The act of renaming Aboriginal children "constitutes one mode of transfiguration through language and its identity-subject-positions" (Emberley, *Defamiliarizing*, 254). Jeremiah's parents name him Champion in honor of Abraham's winning race. The name holds significant value for Champion, but Father Bouchard, from Emanapiteepitat, renames him Jeremiah, and Father Lafleur, the principal of Birch Lake, enforces this name change. Father Lafleur states that Champion's name is Jeremiah Okimasis, and the priest's words cause "Champion's heart [to]…flutter," but Champion "refuse[s] to admit defeat," and uses "the only English word he" knows to "shield his name: 'No. Champion. Champion Okimasis'" (Highway, "*Kiss*," 54). This moment of defiance signifies the intrinsic resilience of children in the residential school system, and how important their identity is to them. Father Lafeur defeats Champion's resistance by referring to "Father Bouchard's" decree in the "baptismal registry," and Jeremiah's will is nearly broken (54). This moment indicates the powerful influence the Catholic faith has on many

Aboriginal people. Jeremiah acquiesces not because of his own religious convictions, but out of the respect he has for his father who accepts that Father Bouchard's words possess "the weight of biblical authority" (54). This loss in self-possession causes Jeremiah to finally "bawl" aloud (54). Jeremiah is somewhat successful in resisting the decree of the priest by maintaining a hyphenated version of his name, "Champion-Jeremiah," for the first two years he is at the institution (58). However, by the time Gabriel joins Jeremiah at Birch Lake, the prefix, 'Champion,' is effectively removed, indicating the powerful influence the residential school has on the children.

Each fall the children's lives are disrupted. Their hair is cut, they are dressed in the "uniform" of "denim shirts and…overalls," and then "marched" though the school in near silence like prisoners (55). Jeremiah spots his elder sister, Josephine, in the hallway on his first day at Birch Lake, and he notices her hair is "cropped at the ears" like all the other girls (55). Reducing the children's individual appearance to a shared one enhances the disruption of individuated self-identity, and increases the assimilationist agenda of the schools. Jeremiah "surreptitiously wave[s]" to Josephine, but she quickly disappears out of sight as she is "swallowed" by one of the many hallway "doors" (55). Gender segregation restricts male and female siblings from interacting, and increases the sense of isolation for many of the children attending residential school.

Jeremiah is alone despite the silent human throb that surrounds him, but then his gift, his musical inclination draws his attention. He hears "[t]he echo[es] of four hundred feet on [the] stone-hard floor," and this staccato sound becomes "music" to his ears: "*peeyuk, neesoo, peeyuk, neesoo*" (55). Jeremiah is soothed by the simple sound of footsteps. Then "music of another kind entirely…seep[s] into his ears," and he "secretly" begins "to put

words" to the sounds that "splash" over "him like warm, sweet water" (55-56). This new music seduces Jeremiah. His stride becomes unconscious, and he separates himself from the line of marching boys. When he locates the source of the music he finds himself in a "room" with "a woman in black" sitting "on a bench" playing "the biggest accordion [he] has ever seen" (56). Jeremiah is used to the "giddy,…clownish" sounds of the accordion, and the "notes" he now hears "glide" in an "intelligent and orderly" manner (56). Jeremiah's spirit nearly leaves his body in transcendent appreciation. He escapes the oppressive world of Birch Lake through the classically cerebral sounds of the piano. Jeremiah is far from home, alone, and the surface of his Aboriginal identity has been stripped away, but his appreciation for music offers him the possibility of hope. Music informs the development of Jeremiah's first survival mechanism: escape through detachment. Jeremiah spiritually transcends the physical degradations of cultural genocide with the aid of music, but to accomplish this he must gain access to the instrument that makes this separation possible.

When Jeremiah first listens to the piano it is Father Lafleur's "soft and fleshy" touch that ends Jeremiah's rapture (57). Jeremiah is drawn back into his physical body, and the reality of his residential school experience (57). He desperately seeks the escape the piano provides, and understands that Father Lafleur's approval is necessary for this to happen. He "nervous[ly]" approaches the priest, and with his limited use of English asks, "Play piano?" (64). Jeremiah convinces the priest of his musical potential by singing a Cree hunting song. Father Lafleur is captivated by Jeremiah's performance, and as the priest's "tongue dart[s] out" to lick "his lower lip" Jeremiah knows he has gained access to the instrument that will shape the course of his life (66-67). The piano enables Jeremiah to separate himself from the

oppressive reality of Birch Lake, but his musical gift also draws the attention of Father Lafleur's pedophilic desires.

Father Lafleur is also drawn to Gabriel's physical beauty, and to numerous other boys as well. Jeremiah and Gabriel are just two of the many children Father Lafleur molests. Gabriel wonders how many "of the four hundred boys" that attend the school with him carry the memories of the "smell" and "taste" of sexual abuse, the "feel [of] the old priest's meaty breath" (109).

Father Lafleur is a sexual predator who molests the innocent Aboriginal children under his supervision. He uses his position of power and authority as the head priest at Birch Lake Indian Residential School to conduct this predation unchecked. He also reduces the risk of exposure by pursuing his victims in the darkness of night while the children are asleep and most vulnerable.

Father Lafleur approaches Gabriel's bed the first night he is at Birch Lake. Gabriel is unsettled by the large dorm room with its single beds, and he wakes Jeremiah with his "sniffling" (73-74). Haig-Brown's study notes how the impact of the "final shock of the first day came at bedtime" for many children: "Instead of the communal beds of home, the children were directed to dormitories containing rows and rows of individual beds" (56). Jeremiah climbs into his little brother's bed to help him sleep, and Father Lafleur "hisse[s]" when he sees Gabriel is not alone (73-74). The priest physically forces Jeremiah to return to his own bed, and then returns his attentions to Gabriel (73). The healthy bond the brothers share is vital to their survival at Birch Lake, but Father Lafleur disrupts their relationship, and this has long-term consequences.

Jeremiah is initially resentful when he learns of Gabriel's forthcoming birth, and Gabriel is "jealous" when Jeremiah leaves for Birch Lake on a "plane," but when Jeremiah returns home the following summer their "play[ful]" collaborations resume (47, 67). Ten months apart does not disrupt the health of their relationship. Jeremiah has reason to be envious when Gabriel joins his elder siblings at Birch Lake, and his beauty draws the attention of the adults gathered. They express their doubts about the brothers' familial relationship: "Can that be Jeremiah's little brother?....Naw,....Much too pretty" (69). However, Jeremiah is "proud" of Gabriel, and protective as well (70). He guides Gabriel into the school, and tries to calms Gabriel when "a nun" frightens him at the entrance of the large, intimidating building (70).

The brothers collaborate year-round when Gabriel turns seven. They are active in theatrical productions associated within the school, and in private creations of their own making. Jeremiah shines behind the piano, and demonstrates a level of agency by modifying a song he learns from his father, "Maple Sugar," into the Christmas performance. Gabriel performs as a dancer at the event, though he feels somewhat stifled by the limited "choreography of the Western "square dance" (76). The brothers' artistic gifts find expression in the oppressive school environment, and this helps them maintain a healthy sense of self.

The piano enables Jeremiah to transcend the trauma he experiences at Birch Lake. Classical music provides a form of escape that separates Jeremiah from his physical reality, and this survival mechanism informs his ability to suppress the traumatic events he experiences. Jeremiah does not remember being molested by Father Lafleur because he shuts out the images, sounds, and sensations of his abuse. However, this mechanism temporarily

fails when he witnesses Father Lafleur molesting Gabriel. Jeremiah's memories of his own abuse resurface briefly before his "mind [quickly] slam[s] shut" again (80). Deena Rymhs describes Jeremiah's "response" as "a 'shattering break or cesura in experience'" (105). She suggests that witnessing Gabriel being molested by Father Lafleur "exceeds" Jeremiah's "frame of reference," and "demands its cancellation from [his] mind" because "there are no words for this violation to be called into existence" (105).

McKegney offers an additional insight into Jeremiah's inability to express in words what he experiences when Gabriel is raped. McKegney highlights the association between Father Lafleur and "the Weetigo,…the most terrifying of creatures" (*Magic Weapons* 160). Weetigo is known as "a cannibalistic human" by some, and "a monster or spirit…by others" (160). McKegney's association of the monster and the priest is drawn from "the Weetigo's defining characteristic" as a "consum[er] of human flesh,…an appropriate symbolic tool for interrogating transgressions of the body by a Roman Catholic priest, particularly in light of the Eucharist" (160). This comparison is enhanced during Abraham's death. Mckegney states that Jeremiah is unable to speak about the abuse he witnesses because he "is not yet well enough armed with Cree spiritual knowledge to draw out the significance of th[e] association" between the priest and Weetigo (160). Jeremiah's inability to talk to Gabriel about Father Lafleur's molestation prevents Gabriel from being prepared for his first encounter of abuse, and further illustrates how the brothers' relationship is disrupted by the priest.

This disruption is increased following Gabriel's rape because Gabriel is now the one person who has the capacity to remind Jeremiah of his own abuse. This is evident when the brothers are travelling with their family among the islands of "Mistik Lake" by canoe the

summer after Gabriel's first year at Birch Lake (Highway, "*Kiss*," 89). Gabriel is drawn to a light in the distance that "flicker[s]" in the night, and Mariesis warns the boys that it is the "island where Father Thibodeau's men caught Chachagathoo,…an evil woman [with]…*machipoowamoowin*,…bad dream power," and not to "look at it" (90-91). Gabriel accurately associates this concept of "bad dream power" with Father Lafleur, and secretly asks Jeremiah if "bad dream power" is "what Father Lafleur [does] to the boys at school" (91). Jeremiah is angry at Gabriel for being reminded of the abuse he struggles to suppress.

Jeremiah is also frustrated that his parents can do nothing to stop Father Lafleur. His response to Gabriel is "as cold as drops from a melting block of ice: 'Even if we told them, they would side with Father Lafleur'" (92). Haig-Brown notes in her study that "[a] commonly mentioned reaction to parents was one of anger and a feeling of rejection on being sent to school" (86). One survivor recalls how she "blame[d her] parents for" being in the school, and that she "resent[ed" her parents "because" she believed "they didn't love" her, that they "threw [her] to the wolves" (86). Another survivor remembers how she could not understand "why" her parents "couldn't just say, 'O.K. let's go home'" (92). Mariesis asks her sons what they are speaking about when they are discussing Father Laleur and bad dream power, and Jeremiah waits until he is "absolutely sure Gabriel" will "remain…silent…until the day they die" before replying '*Maw keegway*.' Nothing" (Highway, *Kiss*, 92).

Jeremiah's survival mechanism of suppression creates a long-term disruption between his mind and his body. He represses the memories of his abuse, and escapes through music. Consequently, his suppression represses his physical body, and this inhibits his ability to express himself, especially his sexuality. Jeremiah is also unable to develop close relationships with other people, and even his relationship with Gabriel is disrupted by his

inability to communicate openly about their history of abuse. Without communication Jeremiah is unable to process his childhood trauma, and as he matures his childhood survival mechanisms continue to influence his life.

Gabriel's response to sexual abuse differs from Jeremiah's. When Gabriel is first molested by Father Lafleur he is asleep in his bed dreaming of his earlier dance performance at the Christmas show. Father Lafleur's hand is "stroking" Gabriel's "penis," and the pleasure Gabriel feels merges with his dream (McKegney, "From Trickster Poetics," 88). The pleasure wakes Gabriel, and he pretends to remain asleep because he is afraid to make "the priest…angry," but he also finds the physical sensations "pleasur[able]," complicating his response to being abused (Highway, *Kiss*, 78). Gabriel thinks what the priest is doing to him is "merely another reason why" children are taken from their homes, and that Father Lafleur's actions are simply "the right of holy men" (78). Gabriel does not suppress the memories of his abuse, like Jeremiah, he embraces them, and how they shape him, particularly his sex life.

Gabriel's process of dealing with his sexual molestation also involves the indoctrination of Christian symbolism at Birch Lake. Gabriel is only seven years old when Father Lafleur begins molesting him, and during this first encounter the priest's "crucifix" comes "to rest on Gabriel's face" (78). Gabriel is nearly overtaken with pleasure, and the "naked…silver" figure of "Jesus Christ" appears so "achingly beautiful" to Gabriel that he wants "to open his mouth and swallow" the crucifix "whole" (78). Highway illustrates the perversity of religious indoctrination in the context of this scene by inferring how the selfish desires of the colonizers corrupts the innocence of Aboriginal children in their attempt to forcibly replace Aboriginal spirituality with Christianity.

Jeremiah approaches Gabriel's bed, and interrupts Gabriel's pleasure. Gabriel notices Jeremiah, and "shut[s] his eyes tight" and holds "his breath," causing the experience to halt temporarily (78-79). Gabriel intertwines the image of pain depicted on the figure of Christ on the cross with the disturbance of his ecstatic sensations, and this interference enhances the complexity of the experience, permanently shaping his relationship with sex. This complex relationship between pleasure and pain with the sexual experience is depicted in a scene during Gabriel's adolescence when he is engaged in a homosexual orgy:

> And the body of the caribou hunter's son was eaten, tongues writhing serpent-like around his own, breath mingling with his, his orifices punctured and repunctured, as with nails. And through it all, somewhere in the farthest reaches of his senses, the silver cross oozed in and out, in and out, the naked body pressing on his lips, positioning itself for entry. Until, upon the buds that lined his tongue, warm honey flowed like river water over granite. (168-169)

McKegney correctly argues that "Gabriel cannot escape [his] masochistic predilection for eroticized pain that the ever-suffering Christ, tortured and penetrated, symbolizes," because, he is captive "within a propagandist evangelical environment devoted to indoctrinating victims with the 'truth' of their inherent sinfulness" ("From Trickster Poetics," 90).

The idea, here, is that sin is part of the religious doctrine that the brothers, and all residential school students, experience. Both Jeremiah and Gabriel accept the idea of sin, and they integrate this concept into the belief that their sexual abuse is their fault. They are like "[w]ell-trained soldiers of the church" (81). One of these doctrines contains the repeated phrase, "Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault" (81). The brothers never discuss this concept with each other, yet they both "conclude that it [is] best to accept the blame" for what is done to them at Birch Lake (81). This idea of acceptance through enforced repetition, according to Bev Sellars, is a cumulative form of

"program[ming]" that turns "normal children" into "robots" (29-45). Religious indoctrination is just one of many aspects of the traumatic legacies of the residential schools.

Gabriel's self-association with the figure of Christ is evident when he performs the role of Christ in the play that he and Jeremiah produce while at Birch Lake called "The Okimasis Brothers present 'The Last Supper'" (180). In the play the bothers, and several other boys, share "bread stolen from the school kitchen" while they sing "'*Kimoosoom Chimasoo*,'" a humorously sexualized Cree "ditty" about an old man with an erection chasing after his wife as she tries to run away (179). Gabriel also performs the role of Christ during "a course in drama for [the] altar boys," and on one occasion he sings this Cree "ditty" again (84-85, 179). Father Lafleur punishes Gabriel by "lash[ing]" him on the buttocks with a "thick black leather belt," a common form of discipline for children speaking their Aboriginal language (84-85). Gabriel resists the urge "to cry," and continues to sing the Cree rhyme while thinking privately to himself, "Yes, Father, please! Make me bleed! Please, please, make me bleed" (85). Gabriel associates this survival mechanism of sexual masochism with the concept of Christ on the cross, and he manipulates the priest into satisfying this desire. This illustrates the level of agency Gabriel attains at residential school, as does the play, "The Last Supper" (179). The boys successfully perform theatrical events without the adults' knowledge, and steal food to feed their hunger, in a symbolic gesture of a last meal in an environment notorious for malnutrition (Milloy 262-264).

Jeremiah plays Judas in "The Last Supper," suggesting that the disruption Father Lafleur initiates between the brothers manifests in their artistic collaborations (Highway, "*Kiss*," 179). The next theatrical creation is fittingly titled "The Okimasis Brothers present 'The Stations of the Cross,' with a scene from 'The Wedding at Cana' thrown in" (86).

Jeremiah and several of his fellow "nine-year-old" students tie Gabriel, "naked but for his underwear," to a makeshift "cross" that is "[w]ired haphazardly to the steel-mesh fence" that surrounds the school (86). Gabriel is "shivering," and is left suspended while the other children are called in to eat (86). Gabriel manages to "free" himself from the cross, and when he enters "the dining room" all the boys point at him and laugh (86-87). Gabriel silently bears their ridicule in Christ-like fashion, but he silently swears "vengeance" upon his brother (86-87).

The disruption of their brotherly bond continues beyond their residential school experience, and culminates in a physical fight that results in a break in their relationship that lasts over a decade. Jeremiah reexperiences his childhood trauma when he witnesses Gabriel engage in homosexual relations with Gregory Newman. Jeremiah "clamp[s] his eyes shut, swallow[s] hard, and will[s] his body dead," vowing to become "pure, undiluted, precise…intellect" once again, but when he sees Gabriel the following day their argument turns violent (204-208). Jeremiah claims he has an obligation to protect his seventeen-year old sibling, but Jeremiah is more troubled by his brother's homosexuality (207). Jeremiah associates Gregory Newman with Father Lafleur, and condemns Gabriel for "let[ting] someone do what'" Father Lafleur did to them, and asks why he "'seek[s] out…people like that?'" (207). Emberley accurately suggests that "Jeremiah's homophobia…replace[s]…the emptiness left by the anger and violation of his childhood body" (*Defamiliarizing* 251). The revenge Gabriel swore upon his brother culminates in his response. He knows Jeremiah better than anyone, and his words are viciously accurate. He criticizes Jeremiah for "try[ing] too hard….[t]o become a whiteman," and this enrages Jeremiah to the point of physical violence (207-208). Gabriel responds by ridiculing Jeremiah's celibacy, stating "'[a]t least

[his] body is still alive,'" and not "'dead," because he chooses to "diddle with a piano'" instead of his own body (207). Both brothers hurt each other physically and verbally, and the Fur Queen "smil[es]" as she watches from atop of the piano (208). They stop short of permanent damage. She knows the hard truths Jeremiah and Gabriel force upon each other are much needed medicine. The Fur Queen trusts she will unite the brothers, and that their collaborations will change the world despite this violent episode, and the years they are apart.

Jeremiah and Gabriel are the first of their family to leave their community to continue their education in the provincial public school system. This is possible because in 1951 the Indian Act was revised and "policies affecting education…under[went] significant, albeit slow change (Milloy 189). One of these changes was "that wherever and whenever possibly Indian children should be educated in association with other children" (189). This new education policy involved "transferring Indian children to provincial schools," resulting in the eventual closing of all Indian Residential schools, a process requiring "nearly four decades" to complete (189). Jeremiah leaves his younger brother behind, again, and travels the "eight hundred miles south" of Eemenapiteepitat to Winnipeg (Highway, *Kiss*, 96).

Jeremiah moves to Winnipeg so that he can receive an education, and perfect his musical talent, but another factor influencing this decision is his inability to see his future in Eemanapiteepitat. The history of Aboriginal peoples is traumatically altered when their children are removed from their community, and then forcibly instructed to deny their cultural identity. The result is that they are often unable to return to their home afterwards. Lee Maracle depicts this effect in her short story, "Charlie":

> More often, he would come across the boys who recently finished school, hanging about the centre of the village, unwilling and poorly equipped to take care of

> themselves. Without hunting or trapping skills, the boys wasted away, living from hand-to-mouth, a burden on their aging parents. One by one they drifted away, driven by the shame of their uselessness. It was not that they could not learn to hunt or trap. But that it takes years of boyhood to grow accustomed to the ways of the forest, to overcome the lonely and neurotic fear it can sometimes create in a man. A boy who suddenly becomes a man does not want to learn what he is already supposed to know well. No man wants to admit his personal fear of home. (330)

Gabriel follows Jeremiah to Winnipeg for similar reasons. Mariesis pleads, "Stay home with us" (Highway, "*Kiss*," 110). Her children are finally free from residential school, but then leave again. Gabriel tells her that he needs "to be with Jeremiah," but Gabriel is her "youngest," her baby, and the loss is hard for her (111). Young people leave their communities, and the "new house[s]" the government builds, and the "cases of whisky" the "plane[s]" fly in do not fill the void their absence creates (110-111). The traumatic legacies of residential schools are far reaching, both in terms of effect and time.

When Jeremiah first arrives in Winnipeg he reflects back on the years he lived at Birch Lake, the "steel-mesh fences and curfews that chain" children to their "bed by 9:00 PM,…[the] tasteless institutional food," and the "nuns and brothers – and priests –[who] watch…every move, every thought, every bodily secretion" (102). Residential school life is not unlike that of a prison, or a psychiatric institution (102). Urban life offers Jeremiah a new sense of freedom. He thinks of "talk[ing] to girls," but is unable to approach them (102). Jeremiah's childhood survival mechanisms continue to influence his life. The separation between his mind and his body persists because he instinctually suppresses the memories of his childhood trauma. He thinks of engaging with others, but remains focused on the cerebral aspects of his school studies, and his piano practice instead. Winnipeg's urban world offers the possibility of freedom, but Jeremiah's childhood trauma maintains the prison-like

existence of his residential school years. To make matters worse he, is once again separated from Gabriel as well.

However, Jeremiah draws from the wisdom of his father's stories, particularly the ones that contain lessons about the gift of "solitude" (103). Abraham is a trapper, and his travels away from home to check his fur lines provide him the life experience needed to appreciate the gifts of friendship that come in the form of "the fierce north wind,…a young pine tree," and "the northern lights" (103-104). Abraham is at one with nature. Jeremiah does not have the northern forests to commune with, nor can he see the stars as clearly as Abraham, but he learns to recognize the messages of life in the "half…million people" that surround him (104). He watches from his seat on the bus as "a woman of untold years" curses at a man who tosses her from his bar: "This is my land, you know that? My land" (105). Across the street he sees "the Jubilee Concert Hall," and the "image of an exotic olive-complexioned man in a black tuxedo" sitting at a "grand Piano" (105-106). These experiences speak to him; they guide his life. Jeremiah is reminded of "how time alone could be spent without need for crying, that time alone was time for shaping thoughts that make the path your life should take, for cleaning your spirit of extraneous – even poisonous matter" (103). His only activity other than school is practicing the piano so that he will one day succeed like his father. His plan: to win the "Crookshank Memorial Trophy," an internationally judged competition that is known as "the launching pad for many a concert artist" (215).

Jeremiah also tries to prove that he is a good student in his new environment. He strives to accomplish this feat by imagining himself as "a perfect little 'transplanted European'" in a high school where the only other Aboriginal student is a girl whom he

abhors because she reminds him of his Cree identity (123-124). Jeremiah embraces the assimilationist agenda of his residential school, and his childhood survival mechanisms transfers to his new school environment. His efforts to convince himself "his own skin [is]…white as parchment" is increased by his repulsion of the images of "drunk" Aboriginal people "on North Main Street" (123-124). Jeremiah's dissociative behavior further isolates him from other people. He "practice[s] the piano…until his fingers bleed" when not at school, and lives a life in the shadows, alone (107).

Two years pass before Gabriel joins Jeremiah in Winnipeg. Jeremiah's appearance is compared to that of "a corpse in a coffin" (113). He is surviving, but only barely, and he often "consider[s] swallowing his…landlady's entire stock of angina pills" to end the ache in his heart (113). Gabriel's presence lifts Jeremiah's spirits, as it did after his first year at Birch Lake, and hearing Gabriel speak Cree is a healing tonic for Jeremiah (113).

Jeremiah's excitement about Gabriel's arrival transpires in a trip to "the Polo Park Shopping Mall" (113-115). He is anxious to initiate his younger brother "into the rituals of urban life" by ridding him of his northern bush clothing and remaking his physical appearance (113-115). Jeremiah helps Gabriel learn to speak English to prepare him for Birch Lake when they are children, and he believes that changing Gabriel's clothing is the best way to help him fit into the non-Aboriginal high school environment. Gabriel embraces his brother's guidance, and when he leaves the mall he transforms from a "brown Indian boy" from a reserve to a teenage "rock star with a tan" (114-119).

Gabriel maintains an element of agency in his transformation. Jeremiah suggests "dark penny loafers with socks so white they look…like snow" because that is what "white

boys" wear, illustrating his compulsion to embrace what he believes is the colonial ideal (116-117). Gabriel, however, is drawn to the white socks with "tricoloured bands around their tops," because although the bands are not visible, they "boost his confidence" (116-117). Gabriel also chooses tight fitting "black" designer "jockeys" with no access hole in the front instead of the "spirit white Stanfields" (118-119). Gabriel's choice of colour in his purchases suggest he understands the importance of his Cree identity, and by eliminating the access hole to his tight fitting protective underwear Gabriel also gains symbolic control and agency over his sexuality.

The Fur Queen observes the brothers as they shop, and inspires them to recall the Cree story about how the weasel gets a "new fur coat," another of the significant oral traditions that is interfused into the novel (118). This myth illustrates an important example of agency and resistance in Cree oral tradition. The story tells of how "Weesageeechak comes down to Earth disguised as a weasel" in order to "kill the horrible monster...Weetigo" because Weetigo is killing people, and then eating them (118-120). To accomplish this feat Weesageechak "crawl[s]…up the Weetigo's bumhole," and "chew[s]…the Weetigo's entrails to smithereens from the inside out" (118-120). Afterwards "God" washes the fecal matter from the weasel's "white coat…in the river," and has to hold weasel "by the tail," which explains why "the weasel's coat is white but for the black tip of [his] tail" (121).

McKegney acknowledges that the brothers' "shopping adventure" can be interpreted as a "re-enact[ment of] the journey of Weesageechak to the Weetigo's belly and back" (*Magic Weapons*, 161). Yet McKegney suggests that there is "significant tension between the two tales" (161). He draws upon the narrator's "metaphorical association" that "both Father Lafleur and the Polo Park Mall" represent "the Weetigo," and that this connection

"suggest[s] a conspiracy between the forces of Christian religion and capitalist economics in the assault on Native cultural identity" (161). In this context McKegney sees the brothers as unconscious "trickster[s]" because they do not "destroy" the mall, but are instead "implicate[d]" by the commercialism of the "capitalist[ic] economics" of the mall (161). The dark tail of the weasel in the myth is the brothers' facial pigmentation that is not covered over with clothing, and the cleaned portion of the weasel's coat are the brothers' "white cultural costumes" (161-162).

McKegney points out that the brothers "are not yet prepared to interpret Cree myth in relation to their own lives" (162). The brothers' residential school training is primarily composed of the "mindless regurgitation of doctrine," and this prevents them from understanding "the spiritual significan[ce]" of the story of the weasel (162). The brothers "mistak[e] living orature for dogma" because they "consider [the]…past telling of the tale" to be the "authoritative" version instead of "reinterpreting" the story in the context of their own lives (162). McKegney cites Vine Deloria Jr. to illustrate the importance of this point:

> Unlike many other religious traditions, tribal religions…have not been authoritatively set 'once and for always.' Truth is the ever changing experiences of the community. For the Indian to fail to appreciate this aspect of his heritage is the saddest of heresies. It means the Indian has unwittingly fallen into the trap of Western religion, which seeks to freeze history in an unchanging and authoritative past. (162)

Until the Okimasis brothers overcome the "externally imposed ideological systems that have worked historically toward their acculturation and oppression" the healing potential of Cree "orature," and its corresponding "spirituality," will not help them heal their childhood trauma (162).

Despite the brothers' inability to grasp the story's significance, Gabriel's act of agency indicates that he is resisting the pressures of acculturation. Gabriel is cooperative in

his brother's attempt to reconstruct his outward appearance, yet he chooses clothing items that make him feel positive about himself. The colors on the socks, and of his new underwear, suggest that his Cree identity is important to him. These items "would not be seen" in public, and this is in line with Gabriel's secretive nature, but also illustrates the pressure he feels from Jeremiah, and society, to conform to the social norm. Gabriel chooses clothing that symbolizes his Cree identity This illustrates an important difference between the brothers. Jeremiah denies his Cree identity, and this inhibits his ability to develop a healthy sense of himself. Gabriel's choice of socks with color is an important step in overcoming his residential school experience, and suggests that he will one day appreciate the lessons of healing contained in Cree orature.

Gabriel's appreciation of the healing potential of the oral tradition occurs many years later when he experiences the story of Chachagathoo in the traditional way from Ann-Adele's Aboriginal perspective. Gabriel takes Jeremiah to "The Wasaychigan Hill Pow Wow" on Manitoulin Island to fulfill the vision he receives from the Fur Queen (240-241). She transforms Gabriel's image into Jeremiah's when he is looking in his dressing room mirror after a performance, and Gabriel hears his brother speak, "*Weechee-in*. Help me" (238). Gabriel's intent to help his brother, ironically helps Gabriel, illustrating the lesson that to give to others is the greatest gift a person can give themselves. The brothers are sitting around "a fire" the first night of the pow wow, and Ann-Adele weaves the myth:

> That winter…the caribou failed to arrive. People in the north grew ill from malnutrition. Or starved. Then came news of men from the south,…men with the ability to talk to God directly….Hope rose on Mistik Lake – these men might save them. But Chachagathoo, the shaman, warned that *K'si mantou*, the Great Spirit, would not abandon them….But the hunger became so severe,…first one died. Then another. And more. Until one day, a man became possessed by Weetigo, the spirit who feasts on human flesh. At this time, the first priest arrived on Mistik Lake….The

> crazed man was brought to the priest, who proclaimed his soul to be possessed by Satan. But the shaman said no. When she started curing the man, when she started exorcising the Weetigo, the priest stopped her. The man died. And the priest accused the shaman of witchcraft. He had her sent to jail in Winnipeg. There, in despair, she hung herself. (245-246)

Ann-Adele's version is different from the one the brothers hear when they are children. Jeremiah resists Ann-Adele's version, but Gabriel is ready to question the authority of his parents' version of the story. He listens with an open heart and an open mind. Earlier in the day he recognizes the gift of "*migosoo*- the eagle" as he witnesses the people praying to "*migosoo*," and sees "the sky reply" (245). Gabriel is ready to receive a lesson from the story, and he is gifted with the understanding that "if *machipoowamoowin*, bad dream power," can kill a person, "then would not *mithoopoowamoowin*, good dream power, be as strong?" (247). Gabriel walks away from the fire empowered by this knowledge.

Gabriel sees life more clearly now because his vision is no longer clouded by fear. He searches for Jeremiah, and finds him amidst a large group of people partying around a large outdoor fire. He tries to talk with his brother, but is interrupted by "four [drunk] young men" who recognize Gabriel as "the famous Indian *ballet* dancer," and fueled by their aggressive homophobia they begin to taunt Gabriel threateningly (250-251). Gabriel looks to Jeremiah for help, but Jeremiah abandons his brother because of his own homophobia. Gabriel is surprised when he recognizes the "terror" in the eyes of the young men (251). He reminds them that "female blood [runs] thick inside [their] veins" too, that "the emotion,…the spirit of a women" is within them, and they fear he will bring the feminine part of themselves to the surface (249-251). Gabriel trusts that good dream power is as strong as bad dream power, and he turns his back on these young men and walks away, not caring if they follow.

The young men want to attack Gabriel because he represents a part of their Aboriginal culture that is negated by colonialism. Qwo-Li Driskill examines this destructive legacy:

> Oppression is used by the 'settlers' to 'tame' our 'wild' and 'savage' understandings of our Selves, to injure our traditional understandings of the world, to pit us against each other along divisions of gender, sexuality, skin tone, geography, 'blood-quantum,' (dis)ability, and class so that the powers that be have less work to do in maintaining control over our homelands, our bodies, and our spirits. (227).

Gabriel represents Aboriginal individuals like Driskill, and Highway, who are "Two-Spirit," a "term…that resists colonial definitions," yet "is an expression of…sexual and gender identities as sovereign from those of white GLBT movements" (223). Driskill quotes Craig Womack to identify the place "Two-Spirit" individuals held in pre-colonial Aboriginal communities: "Rather than disrupting society, anomalies actually reify the existing social order…That which is anomalous is also an important source of power" (226). Driskill states: "Many Cherokee stories deal with characters considered outsiders, who live in liminal spaces, help bring about necessary change, and aid in the process of creation" (227). The story of Chachagathoo is, on one level, a story of inclusion, balancing good and bad power, and Gabriel's empowering episode following his experience with the story is an important example of the role oral traditions have in contemporary society.

The story of Chachagathoo in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* also exemplifies how Christianity disrupts Cree oral tradition to convince the Cree people to deny their heritage and embrace the Catholic faith. In the Catholic version "Father Thibodeau's men [catch] Chachagathoo" and imprison her because they claim she is "an evil woman,…a witch" with "*machipoowamoowin*, bad dream power" (Highway, "*Kiss*," 90, 246-247). The priests use

fear to convince the Cree people that their "last shaman in that part of the world, the last medicine woman, the last woman priest" is dangerous (256-247). They do this because she is their greatest obstacle to converting the Cree people to their Catholic faith (246-247). The colonizing society is patriarchal, and "cannot accept women as leaders" because it threatens their position of authority (Driskill 224). Ann-Adele informs the brothers that their "parents' generation" was "Lied to and lied to and lied to!" (247). Abraham and Mariesis are impressionable children when the story occurs, and they pass this version of the story onto their children. Then, when the children are sent to residential school, the concept of Cree heritage as evil, and the Catholic faith is God is reinforced.

One of the first lessons Jeremiah receives at Birch Lake is about the difference between Heaven and Hell: "Heaven" is "populat[ed]" by "beautiful blond men" intended to represent the colonial population; and "blackish-brownish" human-like figures fill, similar in appearance to the Aboriginal population, fill "Hell" (58-62). Jeremiah identifies with the darker figures in Hell, and he exhibits a resistance towards the priest's intended moral lesson regarding the difference between Heaven and Hell; he is drawn to "King Lucy" because he appears to be "having a good time" (61). However, as Jeremiah matures he accepts the Catholic faith, denies his Cree heritage, and aspires to embody the colonial ideal.

Jeremiah's childhood survival mechanism relies on the suppression of truth. He denies the reality of his traumatic childhood, and in the process, he denies his own physical body. At first, he accomplishes this through the classically intellectual sounds of the piano, but as he competes for the "Crookshank Memorial Trophy" his "heart" aches for his absent brother, and the beauty of the northern bush of his home (210-215). Jeremiah's performance during the competition is inspired by his sense of loss, and although he succeeds in becoming

the “first Indian to win” the competition “in its forty-seven-year history” the emptiness inside of him persists (212-214). Jeremiah accomplishes his goal. He is the best, and is awarded a trophy to prove it, just like Abraham, but music no longer carries him away from the truth of his life. He leaves the concert hall to bury the thoughts that trouble him with alcohol at a bar on North Main Street, and sits, for the first time, amongst the urban Aboriginal community from which he has tried so desperately to remain separate.

Jeremiah no longer tries “to change the meaning of his past, the roots of his hair, [and] the colour of his skin” (215). He pursues a career in social work, and establishes himself at the “Winnipeg Indian Friendship Centre” where one of his jobs is to accompany another worker and circle back alleys in the centre’s “van” in search of people in need of help (219-222). He regularly sips from a “flask” of alcohol while he works to ease his daily “hangover,” and evade the memories that “haunt” him (219-222). His “six years” as a social worker become a continual state of “purgatory” (221). He manages his drinking to accommodate the need to function at work, but this changes when he travels home to be with Abraham on his deathbed. Jeremiah “keep[s]” pace with his relations, “shot for shot,” following the funeral, and then nearly freezes to death after passing out in the snow (229). The Fur Queen reveals herself in the form of “a torch-singing fox,” and her message for Jeremiah is that “‘without entertainment,…without distraction, without dreams, life’s a drag.…Without celebration, without magic to massage your tried, trampled-on old soul,….life [is]….pointless’” (230-233). The Fur Queen does her best to get Jeremiah to stop feeling sorry for himself, and remind him of his gift. She leaves and Jeremiah once again experiences the beauty of music. He stands amidst the power of nature and hears “the sound

of the north wind,…the most beautiful song he ha[s] ever had" in its "slow, persistent, moaning," but when he returns to Winnipeg he resumes his purgatory like existence (234).

It is not until Gabriel convinces Jeremiah to join him at a studio that Jeremiah's musical gift reawakens. Their bond metaphorically brings Jeremiah back from the dead. Gabriel trusts that music will help his brother. Gabriel ensures there is a piano in the studio, and when Jeremiah's fingers finally touch the keys the music he creates sends Gabriel "to his feet…yodel[ling]….'*Weeks'chiloowew!*'" (264-266). In an instant the Okimasis brothers are once again sharing their gifts. Their initial "improvisation" evolves in "ten months…into a showpiece" that confirms Gabriel's abilities as "a choreographer with promise" (266-268). He is magnificent on stage as well, and the audience shows their appreciation. Gabriel understands the importance of sharing this experience with Jeremiah, and he "proudly introduces his brother to the world" at the close of the performance (265-268). The Okimasis brothers stand on stage and embrace the theatrical community together. Their gifts touch those in the audience, and beyond, and support their personal journeys of healing.

This healing process intimately connects to their Cree culture. Their Cree heritage informs their theatrical production. Jeremiah uses the piano as a pow wow drum, "pound[ing] at the bass strings of the instrument…with a beaded drumstick" as he leads the "dancers….into a pentatonic chant, '*Ateek, ateek, astum, astum, joah, ho-ho!*'" (267). Jeremiah merges Aboriginal material, spiritual, and cultural traditions with Western theatrical traditions. His blood no longer runs cold at the sounds of the Aboriginal drum beat of ceremony as it did when he was on Manitoulin Island. He embraces his Cree heritage. A transformation occurs during his collaborative work with Gabriel, and it is an important step towards healing the trauma of assimilationist indoctrination. The brothers' collaboration, and

their reconnection to their Cree cultural roots through their "magic weapons," combined with the Western classical artistic forms they have mastered, enable them to fulfill their father's dying words, and "make a new world" (267).

The brothers continue to collaborate. Jeremiah's first attempt at playwriting is only moderately successful, and doubt plagues him, but he is inspired by his memories of childhood in the beauty of northern Manitoba, and of his years at Birch Lake. The act of writing empowers Jeremiah. The keys of the typewriter become like the keys of the piano, and he uses his newly emerging memories to re-examine his past. Emberley describes this process:

> Finally, it is storytelling itself that signifies the transfigurative possibilities for recoding the representational violence of colonization….But these old codes will not be discarded; they will be exposed first and then recycled into new narratives and new hybrid narrative forms that combine Cree stories and Christian myth, a new ecology of social life with new stories, new realities, and new histories. (*Defamiliarizing* 254)

Jeremiah finishes writing "'Ulysses Thunderchild,'" a play about the "'Son of Ayash,'" but with a "'modern twist'" (Highway, "*Kiss*," 277). Jeremiah justifies his contemporary adaptation by comparing it to James Joyce's novel, *Ulysses*. Jeremiah states that "if James Joyce can do 'one day in the life of an Irishman in Dublin, 1903,'" then he can "do 'one day in the life of a Cree man in Toronto, 1984'" (277). Jeremiah's comparison with Joyce's *Ulysses* associates his play's revolutionary use of oral traditions in the theatre with Joyces's use of new literary techniques that had a revolutionary effect on the literature that followed. The name *Ulysses* also acknowledges the beginning of Western literature, and Jeremiah's play draws from Cree oral traditions that reach back to ancient Cree mythology.

One of the reasons Jeremiah modernizes his play is so that his "little bears," the young Cree language students he works with at "The Muskoosis Club of Ontario" will be able to "relate to it" (309, 278). Jeremiah continues to work as a social worker, but switches his focus from adults to children. He spends his days as an "excited Cree-language revivalist" teaching "six- to ten-year-olds" the Cree language through stories like "'The Son of Ayash,'" because he believes Aboriginal children need stories they can relate to, that this will help reduce the high "dropout rate for Native people" in the education system (269-270, 278).

Diana Steinhauer and James Lamouche point out in their article, "*miyo-pimatisiwin* 'A Good Path,'" that "language" is one of the "three…main areas or themes" that "determine…health from an Indigenous, specifically *nehiyawak* (Cree), perspective;" the other two are "land" and "relationships" (158). Their study examines the success of Blue Quills First Nations College (BQFNC) in northeastern Alberta, "an independent post-secondary institution" that offers programs "from basic education" to "doctoral degrees" (157). Elders involved in the college emphasize that "languages are where…knowledge lives and it is the best protection of that knowledge" (157). The "prime objective" of the school "is to promote a sense of pride in Indigenous heritage and reclaim traditional knowledge and practices," because when students are "ground[ed] in their cultures, languages, and healing traditions" they are "health[ier]" and able to participate more fully in their academic success (156). One Elder at the college states: "Learning and understanding our culture and history is important to understanding health" (157-158). Jeremiah's language lessons with the children exemplify the principals of BQFNC.

Jeremiah uses his musical gift to enhance the children's learning process. The "*Muskoosisuk*," 'little bears,' take turns repeating sections of the story with the aid of

"music" to help them: "*Ayash oogoosisa, oogoosisa, oogoosisa…Peechinook'soo…peechinook'soo…Peeyatuk…peeyatuk*" (Highway, *Kiss*, 269-270). Jeremiah then translates the Cree stories into English, and shares with them the lessons of each story. Jeremiah unites his musical gift with his Cree culture, and the language of the colonizer, illustrating an inclusive quality he was unable to achieve earlier in his life.

During one of these storytellings Jeremiah is shocked by "Willie Joe Kayash," a child that reminds him of Gabriel in his youth (270-271). Jeremiah is using Weetigo to explain the concept of evil, and Willie Joe tentatively asks, "What's a…a Weetigo?" (271). Jeremiah playfully responds, "A Weetigo is a monster who eats little boys," suggesting Weetigo favors "little" boys just like him (271). Jeremiah's comment is intended as a harmless gesture of play, but it reflects the horrors he experiences from Father Lafleur's abuse as Birch Lake. At the end of the lesson Willie Joe runs to Jeremiah and "buri[es]" his little "face" into Jeremiah's "groin,…mumble[s]" that "Weetigo" has eaten him, and then bites Jeremiah through his jeans (271). The child awakens Jeremiah's dormant sexuality and Jeremiah immediately "disengage[s]" himself from the child, "squat[s]" down to face Willie Joe, and asks him what he means (271). Willie Joe responds by "kiss[ing]" Jeremiah "square on the lips…like a…lover," and then skipping happily out the door as he sings the 'The Son of Ayash' in Cree (271). Jeremiah's memories of childhood abuse are brought to the surface by a young version of Gabriel, and Jeremiah is horror stricken with the possibility of becoming the Father Lafleur figure in this abusive scenario. He spirals "[i]nto a vortex screaming with monsters" as he "stumble[s]" towards the office of the director of "The Friendship Center" looking for answers (271-272). Willie Joe lives with his mother in a "shelter for battered women," and his biological "father [is] nonexistent" (271). The child's "stepfather" has been

charged with child molestation, and may face imprisonment, but "for Jeremiah, jail [is] nowhere near enough" punishment (272).

McKegney correctly suggests that when Jeremiah's sexuality is awakened by little Willie Joe, it indicates that Jeremiah has a "latent capacity to become an abuser," regardless of the fact that his "arousal" is "unwanted" ("From Trickster Poetics," 100). Jeremiah then "negotiate[s] a way of dealing with his capacity to abuse" by immersing himself on "a path" that has an "enormous potential for regeneration," he channels his energies into his creative writing (100-101). Writing gives Jeremiah the opportunity to "intertwine both his distant past and the recent trauma in a mythic discourse he can ultimately control" (101). The creative process enables Jeremiah to "actively prevent…himself from feasting on others like the Weetigo," and "instead" find "emotional, spiritual, and psychological nourishment in the creative process" that he shares with his brother, and the theatre community (101).

Artistic collaboration in the community of the theatre is a vital component in the healing process depicted in a scene describing a breakthrough that occurs during rehearsal. The brothers and the cast form a community within the theatrical community, and the artistic collaboration of this smaller community is vital to Jeremiah's healing journey. Jeremiah persuades Gabriel to "direct" their plays, and Gabriel's expertise as a dance "choreographer" proves invaluable in bringing Jeremiah's cerebral writing to life (Highway, *Kiss*, 278-280). Jeremiah's dialogue is too cerebral, and this frustrates the actors. Gabriel responds by initiating an improvisational exercise that connects the actors to their characters viscerally. Jeremiah becomes enraged as he watches "the actors…shouting, wailing, and snarling…as…they hurl…themselves" around the rehearsal "space," completely disregarding the dialogue he has written (280). Jeremiah tries to intervene, but Gabriel orders him back to

his piano, and Jeremiah is pushed beyond his coping threshold when Amanda "spit[s] 'Stick to the goddamn piano…where you belong!'" (280). Jeremiah responds by flying into a rage, "claw[ing] at the keyboard," and creating a cacophony of sounds that inspires the cast, "one by one," to fall "in with a chant,…'*Aiaiaiaiaiaiaiaiayash, oogoosisa*, *oogoosisa*,'" ("the son of Ayash"; 280). Jeremiah is pushed, with the hard-edged support of those who love him, to reach deep beneath the surface of his protective survival mechanism, and finally merge the long-suppressed rage of his childhood trauma with the instrument that served to imprison his physical body. Jeremiah must transform his relationship with the piano on a physical/emotional level to break the spell of his self-induced sleep of repression, and the cacophony of sounds he creates merges with the actors improvisation to create "magic,…a dance, a Cree rite of sacrifice, swirling like blood around the altar and bouncing off the bass of the piano" (280). The theatrical community of players bring their gifts to the stage, and they push each other to develop and expand their capacity to express their truest selves. It is this collaborative bond that supports Jeremiah's physical/emotional breakthrough, and the collective result is the "magic" needed for the show to succeed (279-280).

Another important stage in Jeremiah's healing journey occurs when he experiences the play he has helped create collectively from this place of magic. The "opening night" performance transports Jeremiah back to his childhood, and these happy "memor[ies] open…the padlocked doors" containing the trauma of his childhood (284-287). Jeremiah re-experiences Father Lafleur taking him from his bed in the boys' dormitory to the priest's private quarters to be brutally raped, and then given a "chocolate bar" to compensate for this horrific corruption of innocence (286-287). Jeremiah cannot recall the name of the chocolate bar. He thinks it is either a "Sweet Marie," or a "Coffee Crisp," or a "Mr. Big," because it is

too dark in the boy's dormitory to see clearly (287). Jeremiah offers Gabriel a "Sweet Marie" chocolate bar to ease Gabriel's feelings of loneliness for their home on "Mistic Lake" during Gabriel's first year in Winnipeg, indicating the sense of comfort these chocolate bars provided Jeremiah after being sexual abused by Father Lafleur (127). Jeremiah's collaborative theatrical creation helps him remembers the events of his past, and guide him in processing these memories instead of suppressing them again.

The show is a success, and Jeremiah channels the trauma of his youth into writing his next play instead of seeking escape, denial and suppression. He travels home to Eemanapiteepitat, and drafts his next play, "Chachagathoo, the Shaman," a theatrical work that reinterprets the Cree oral tradition in the context of his life, his brother's life, and that of his Cree community (288-295). Jeremiah becomes a traditional Cree storyteller in a contemporary context. He understands the spiritual truth of his Cree oral traditions, and how their gifts exist in the relationship they have with the ever-changing reality of life. Jeremiah expresses the gifts of these oral traditions through contemporary theatrical collaborations, and in the process his personal journey of healing reaches outwards, helping his brother's healing, and potentially supporting others on their healing journeys through the live performances of the plays.

Jeremiah's healing process is spiritual and physical. When Jeremiah connects emotionally with his body he effectively unlocks the traumatic memories of his childhood abuse, and the spiritual lessons he learns from the oral traditions while writing and collaborating with Gabriel and their theatre group help support him in resisting the compulsion to suppress the painful memories of his past.

Gabriel does not suppress his experience of being raped by Father Lafleur like Jeremiah. Instead, Gabriel embraces the priest's corruption of his innocence. This corruption transforms into a Weetigo-like addiction to sex that results in his eventual death from AIDS. Emberley points out that "Gabriel...doesn't bury the secret of his experience of violence but relives it in a parallel life to his dance career as a male prostitute on the streets" (*Defamiliarizing* 251). Gabriel travels the globe dancing in Gregory Newman's company, and is supported by his mentor, but there is no evidence of any form of love between them. Gregory privately thinks of Gabriel as "a piece of dirt" because he is aware of Gabriel's secret sex life, yet stays with Gabriel out of self-interest (Highway, "*Kiss*," 266).

Gabriel's journey of healing begins when he sets out to help Jeremiah. Together they transform themselves through their theatrical collaborations. Gabriel, like Jeremiah, expands his creative talent, developing the skills of "actor and director" to his already highly accomplished forte as a "dancer-choreographer," but their collaborative endeavors do not end his hunger for sexual gratification the way writing helps Jeremiah end the suppression of his memory of abuse (285).

Gabriel does end his unhealthy relationship with Gregory, and his new relationship with "Robin Beatty" suggests they love one another, as Robin is holding Gabriel's "head…lovingly…in his arms" when Gabriel dies (303). Gabriel is also less secretive with Jeremiah. He informs Jeremiah when he goes to get a blood-test for HIV, indicating the health of their relationship, and his capacity to become less secretive. Yet Gabriel continues to seek out sex with strangers, even after he begins dating Robin.

Gabriel knows that his sexual needs are not healthy, but he cannot change. Shortly after having his blood tested for HIV he has sex in the "alley…[b]ehind the clinic" with a man referred to simply as "the leather man" (281-282). He then uses the "fifty-dollar bill" the man in leather pays him for sex towards "a costume" for the play (282). Gabriel uses this money for theatre expenses, but this only allows him to evade the "torture [of] moralizing" over his inability to stop his addiction to sex (282). Then, when he visits his physician, and learns he will significantly shorten his life unless he implements strict health measures, he is back in an "alley" with "[a] businessman" who pays him "a hundred bucks" for sex (295). Gabriel's journey of healing is not physical, but instead involves the health of his relationships with others, and his spiritual health.

Gabriel does not immediately tell Jeremiah the test results, but Jeremiah senses the truth as he watches Gabriel struggling with his medication after a "rehearsal" (292). Their love for one another is unconditional. Jeremiah cannot heal Gabriel's body, or even help him overcome his destructive addiction to sex, but through their collaborative process Jeremiah does help prepare Gabriel for his spiritual journey after life.

An example of how the brothers' theatrical collaborations help Gabriel is depicted in the novel in the scene from "Chachagathoo, the Shaman" (295). Jeremiah's insight into his brother's life is evident in this play. Gabriel is the hero, "Migisoo," the Cree word for eagle (294). Migisoo is a man, and his community is starving to death (293-294). Weetigo approaches to devour their wasted bodies and Migisoo fights the "monster" (294). It looks like Migisoo will lose, and then, at the last moment, "the creature [leaps] into [Migisoo's] mouth,…[a]nd [is] gone" (294). A possible reading of this scene reveals how Jeremiah creates a role for his brother that embodies the struggle of Gabriel's life, and prepares him for

his spiritual fight ahead. Weetigo represents the corruption of Gabriel's innocence the moment he is first raped, and yearns to swallow the crucifix hanging from Father Lafleur's neck. Gabriel's sexualized hunger results in his contraction of AIDS, and his physical death. However, Gabriel's healing journey is spiritual in nature, and involves the mending of the disruption created by Father Lafleur.

When Gabriel's health deteriorates, and he is confined to a hospital bed, his concerns shift away from the physical to the spiritual realm. He thinks about his father, and what happens after death. He is with Jeremiah, and wonders aloud who greeted Abraham when he died, "Jesus? Or Weesageechak?" (298). Gabriel shares with his brother that he believes "Weesageechak….The Trickster….The clown who bridges humanity and God," and not Jesus, is waiting (298). This is a significant moment in Gabriel's journey. His disapproval of the priests is not new, he often criticizes Jeremiah's sincerity when they attend church, and his decision to replace Catholicism with Cree spirituality marks a significant moment in his healing journey. Gabriel is effectively confronting the moment of his initial abuse when he merges his concept of Christ with his understanding of the physical act of sex.

Gabriel battles Weetigo one last time as he lays dying in the hospital. He struggles with the evil of Weetigo that burns with desire inside of him, and he breaks the spell of the monster: "Get away, *awus!*" (300). Gabriel rejects Catholicism. He tells Jeremiah that he does "not want priests anywhere near" him, that their mother, Mariesis, can have "her Catholic mumbo-jumbo," but if she demands a priest be present she is not welcome in his room (299).

Gabriel also addresses the disruption in his relationship with Jeremiah that stems from Father Lafleur's abuse. Jeremiah feels guilty for failing to protect his younger brother, but Gabriel reminds him of the time they are nearly crushed by the herd of caribou, of how Jeremiah helped him "up [the] rock" to safety (301). Gabriel tells Jeremiah, "What I did, I did on my own" (301). Gabriel accepts responsibility for his life, and this helps prepare him for death. Gabriel is freeing himself from his worldly concerns as he prepares to die so that his transition into the spirit world will be unencumbered.

Those who love Gabriel support him and are by his side as he is dying. Robin is holding Gabriel's "head gently in his arms," Ann-Adele is preparing Garbiel's spiritual journey in the Ojibway/Cree tradition, and Jeremiah succeeds in keeping the priest from entering the room while squeezing Mariesis inside, despite her fierce disapproval at that priest's absence. Ann-Adele continues the ceremony undisturbed amidst the noise and chaos of the alarms set off by the "smoke" from the "sacred herb[s]," and Gabriel experiences his transition into spirit aboard his fathers' sled with the Fur Queen guiding the way (304-306).

Tomson Highway's novel, *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, illustrates the disruptive and destructive legacies of residential schools. Colonizers disrupt Cree language and cultural continuity by the removal of children from their homes, the indoctrination of Catholicism, and inhuman conditions of abuse. This dislocation results in a distortion of identity for the children that has an impact on them for the rest of their lives.

The novel focuses on the sexual abuse the Okimasis brothers experience at Birch Lake. These events are traumatizing for the brothers, and their contrasting responses to this abuse provides readers with a complex representation of the impact residential schools had

on many children. Moreover, Highway illustrates how the abuse affects the brothers' relationship with each other. However, a healthy community is the reflection of the health of the many personal relationships that create a community.

The brothers' artistic gifts create a bond beyond that of sibling association. Their childhood collaborative creations begin a shared journey that remains throughout their lives. The brothers are separated by ten months, a few years, and then even more than a decade, yet their ability to collaborate artistically has the capacity to heal them, and "potentially alter [the] structures of power" that created their destructive disruption in the first place (McKegney, *Magic Weapons*, 165).

Their gifts are an important aspect of how they see themselves, especially during their residential school years when their identities are disrupted. Music, stories and dance help Jeremiah and Gabriel survive as children, thrive as adults, and heal their past traumas. Their gifts are the conduit with which they express their lives, and their cultural identity, through the reimagining of their Cree oral traditions.

The oral traditions interfused into the novel illustrate the disruptive impact of colonialism upon Aboriginal communities. The reimagining of these traditions in a contemporary context is an important component in the ongoing healing of Aboriginal people, and their communities.

The Elders in the novel are vital in the cultural continuity process. Abraham's syncretic application of Catholicism and Cree tradition inspires the brothers to develop their gifts, and to transform them into "magic weapons, [and] make a new world" (267). Ann-Adele, an inter-cultural Aboriginal Elder, provides a valuable perspective on Cree oral

traditions, and illustrates the value of Aboriginal traditions outside of the Cree context. Jeremiah becomes a "Cree-language revivalist" both in his work with children, and in the theatre, and is a contemporary Cree Elder in the making (270). Cultural continuity in Aboriginal cultures is dependent upon the Elders who hold the knowledge, and have the wisdom to know how best to share this vital component of tradition.

The oral traditions themselves are filled with characters and stories that unify the novel. The Fur Queen, The Son of Ayash and his magic weapons, Weesageechak as the weasel and his fight with Weetigo, Chachagathoo the Shaman, these stories and their characters help guide the reader to a deeper understanding of the journeys of the Okimasis brothers, and the messages of healing their stories express.

Chapter Three

The Gift of Sight: Oral Traditions and Cultural Survival in Richard Wagamese's *Indian Horse*

Richard Wagamese uses a retrospective first-person narrative mode to tell the story of Saul Indian Horse, an Ojibway Indian Residential School survivor. The novel is Saul's account of his personal history, and his journey of healing that he initiates after nearly dying from extensive alcohol abuse. Saul's healing process is an example of Neal McLeod's concept of the healing potential of storytelling, of "'coming home' through stories and narrative memory" (184). Saul instinctually agrees to enter the treatment program designed to "help…Native People" overcome their addictions (Wagamese, *Indian*, 190). The program requires participants to examine their life story so they can "understand" the forces that led to their unhealthy addictions (2). Saul's recollections of his past are filled with the Ojibway oral traditions he learns as a child, and these stories are instrumental in his healing process.

The Indian Act forced Aboriginal children "from their homes and their communities," and the residential schools "stripped" them of their "dignity" in a process McLeod refers to as "cultural genocide and spiritual exile" (179). McLeod notes that many of the survivors of these institutions of assimilation "never came 'home,'" in "an ideological and spatial sense," after being released from residential school, but "instead…spent their lives ensnared in alcoholism and other destructive behaviors" (179). Saul recalls feeling as though his life was "Beyond hope," that "the knowledge of light" was but a "haunt[ing]" spectre during his years of heavy drinking (Wagamese 189-190). McLeod compares such an existence to that of a "ship…cut off from [its] anchor," which then "drift[s] beyond the known" (184). However, Saul reexamines his life, and reconnects to the wisdom in the Ojibway stories of his youth.

He trusts the insights these stories offer, and is guided back to his adoptive Ojibway community in Manitouwadge.

When Saul returns to Manitouwadge he shares, for the first time, his life story with others. His ability to communicate with the Kellys helps "anchor" Saul "in the world" again, an important "responsibility" that McLeod states is essential for the health of Aboriginal communities (184). For McLeod, this "anchor" is his "Cree narrative memory," and for Saul it is the Ojibway oral traditions he learns from his grandmother intermixed with his own life story (184). McLeod recognizes the important efforts of his Elders, and their "tremendous efforts…to find their anchor again,…to 'come home' through stories and narrative memory" (184). McLeod states: "because of them, we have that anchor today, and it is our time, it is our responsibility to keep that anchor, if Cree narrative memory is to survive through the coming generations" (184). Saul's decision to coach youth hockey, and impart the wisdom of his Ojibway oral traditions unto the younger generations, instead of playing hockey with his old teammates, indicates he accepts his responsibility as an Ojibway man, and will be a leader in his community as he becomes an Elder.

Saul refers to Ojibway oral traditions and cultural knowledge throughout the telling of his story. He begins with the "legends" of his people, "The fish Clan of the northern Ojibway" (Wagamese, *Indian*, 1). Thus, Saul appreciates he is a member of "the Fish Clan of the northern Ojibway" people whose homeland is "in the territories along the Winnipeg River, where the river opens wide before crossing into Manitoba after it leaves Lake of the Woods and the rugged spine of northern Ontario" (1). Saul tells of how the Ojibway creation "legends" describe how Saul's people "emerged from the womb of…Mother the Earth," that they are born with the "heartbeat" of their earth mother "Aki,…thrumming in [their] ears,"

and how the Ojibway language "rolls and tumbles" like the sounds of "the rivers that serve as [their] roads" (1). The physical features of Ojibway connect to the land, as well as to the animals that inhabit the land: "our cheekbones are cut from those granite ridges that rise above our homeland….Our feet and hands are broad and flat and strong, like the paws of a bear" (1).

Thus, Saul's identity and spirituality as an Ojibway person comes from a rich history interconnected with the natural environment. Saul points out that Ojibway people refer to themselves as "Anishinabeg," that they are the "stewards and protectors" of their homeland, that it is their responsibility to ensure a high quality of life for future generations, and that this is a responsibility that connects all generations of Ojibway people in a common pursuit (1). This guides Saul's direction in life as the novel concludes.

Saul's role as a leader of his people is indicated by his gift of sight that he inherits from his "great-grandfather,…Shabogeesick," a "shaman" who leads his people during his lifetime, and afterwards, in the spirit world as well (3-4). Saul describes himself as "a seer" (3). He can perceive the world on a deeper, more profound level than most other people. Naomi helps Saul learn how to develop this gift. She uses stories to teach Saul Ojibway culture and traditions, and this education guides Saul throughout his life, helping him survive St. Jerome's, thrive as a hockey player, and eventually overcome his childhood trauma and begin his path as a respected Elder of his community.

Basil Johnston's concept of the "three levels of meaning" in the "words" of his "tribal language" help illustrate the nature of Saul's gift of sight ("Is That All" 113). Johnston uses the term Anishinaubae to illustrate the differences between the three levels of meanings of

Ojibway words. On the first level Anishinaubae identifies a specific group of people, but there exists another "more fundamental meaning" that is evident when the term is broken down into its parts: "Onishishih," translates to mean "good, fine, beautiful, [and] excellent," and "naubae" represents the idea of "being…human" (114). On this second level Anishinaubae is interpreted as meaning a good person. However, the third level of meaning, which is "philosophical" in nature, defines Anishinaubae as "a person of good intent, a person of worth" (114). Johnston proposes that in order to achieve this philosophical level of understanding a person must know, and understand the oral traditions of the Anishinaubae people (114). Johnston's concept of a third, philosophical, level of understanding is like Saul's gift of sight. Saul can envision the deeper meaning of life from the world around him, but only with the support of Naomi's early cultural education.

An example of Saul's gift of sight is his ability to excel at the game of hockey. The average player functions on the first level. Their pursuit of the puck comprises their primary focus. The second level of the game involves the relationship dynamic of the players on both teams. When Saul first watches hockey being played his "eyes" focus on the players as they pursue the puck (Wagamese, *Indian*, 56). However, Saul soon realizes the deeper, philosophical, level of the game. He can see the "order," and the "genuine rhythm" that exists "under" the seemingly chaotic nature of the movement of the skaters as they chase after the puck (58). Saul realizes that "[t]he lines…create [the] space" needed "to make" things "happen" in the game, and can see "how a skater might move, [and] where he might go to gain the advantage of space" (58). He recalls Naomi's stories about Shabogeesick's ability to "determine where" and when game or fish was going to be so that his people could survive

(58). Informed by the stories Naomi tells him, Saul can perceive the deeper meaning of life, and this gift of perception helps him access the underlying philosophy of the game of hockey.

Naomi is Saul's primary guardian for the first eight years of his life. Saul's parents are first generation residential school survivors, and Naomi witnesses the destructive effects residential school has upon her children's generation. Saul's parents use alcohol to cope with their residential school experience, and their abuse of alcohol increases when their children are taken away to attend residential school. The disruptive legacies of residential schools produce intergenerational trauma. Naomi assumes responsibility for Saul, and protects him from his parents, and the older adults, when their drinking leads to violence.

Naomi teaches Saul the traditional ways of their people, and this causes further disruption amongst the Indian Horse family. Saul's parents embrace the Christian indoctrination of their residential school experience, and try to prevent Naomi from teaching Saul and his brother their Ojibway culture because they believe their Ojibway culture is no longer valid. This is most evident when the family is at "Gods Lake," a place of spiritual significance for the Indian Horse family (20-25). Naomi guides her family to the lake to try to heal from the trauma that is destroying them. Saul's older brother, Ben, is with them. He is dying of consumption after running away from residential school, and his illness is another example of the destructive legacies of the schools. Only Naomi and Saul are willing to be near Ben because the other family members fear the disease they know killed countless of their fellow students while at residential school.

Naomi teaches Saul and Ben the traditional method of praying while they are harvesting "manoomin" 'wild rice,' and the female adults condemn Naomi, arguing that "the

proper way [to]…give thanks…[is] with the rosary" (21-25). This intergenerational tension divides the family further, and when Ben dies the Indian Horse family is ripped apart by their conflicting spiritual beliefs. Naomi tries to "honor" Ben "in the old way," but Mary accuses Naomi of being a "[h]eathen," and claims her son's dead body (31). Mary proclaims that the old ways "are gone," and that the Ojibway "gods are dead" (31-32). Mary's connection to her Ojibway culture is severed because of her residential school experience, and is replaced with Christianity. Mary convinces the other adults to abandon Naomi and Saul at Gods Lake for fear that they are contaminated with consumption, and they leave with the intention of giving Ben a Christian "burial" (32). Saul is distraught by his family's departure, yet he senses that Naomi's spiritual beliefs feel "right," and she continues to protect him, and instruct him in the ways of their people.

Aside from Naomi, only Saul can perceive the spiritual significance of Gods Lake. The other family members are willing to follow Naomi to the lake, and they listen to the stories she tells as she tries to prepare them for their experience at Gods Lake, but only Saul embraces the knowledge in the stories, and connects with the spirits of their ancestors through vision. Naomi warns her family that Gods Lake has a "powerful presence" (18). She tells them of a "Long Ago time before the Zhaunagush" 'white man,' when Ojibway "people relied on intuition – the great spirit of thought," and could hear "the rocks…sing" (18). Saul carries Naomi's stories in his heart, and when he is alone he develops a personal ritual based on these stories. He "close[s his] eyes," listens to the "breeze," and lets his intuition guide his "breath" (22). Saul accesses his gift of sight, and sees his ancestors. He learns that the lake "belongs to" the Indian Horse "family" because a branch of the Indian Horse "family" once "died there" in a rockslide, and their spirits remain at the lake (22-25). Saul is "comfort[ed]"

by this vision, and the ritual he develops from Naomi's stories becomes an important component in the development of his gift of sight, his survival, and his eventual healing process (25).

Naomi continues Saul's cultural education when they are forced to make their way to "Minoose," where her "brother's son…lives," because winter arrives and Saul's parents have not returned (35). She tells Saul stories of their people through the night. One story is about "the Star People" who arrived "Long Ago," and "brought teachings, secrets of the cosmos and the basis of [Ojibway] spiritual[ity]" (40). Naomi's stories provide Saul with a rich history of his people. She witnesses the effects of residential school upon her children's generation, and knows Saul needs to establish a healthy relationship with his Ojibway identity before he too is sent to the schools. Murdena Marshall states: "children need to know their ancestral teachings before *jumping without a parachute into another culture*," and that "[s]tories are the main vehicle of instruction and guidance and thus a vital tool at all stages of life development, but especially during the early years of childhood and adolescence where such guidance affects life choices" (21).

Naomi stops along a riverbank to help Saul develop his gift of sight. She claims she is lost, and asks Saul to find a "trail" Shaboogeesick once "cut" so they can continue forward (40). Saul sees nothing at first, but he uses the ritual he is developing. He "close[s his] eyes," listens to "the hiss of the river coursing past the rocks," breathes in "deep[ly]," lifts his face upwards, and hears a voice "from the trees" call his name (40). Saul "open[s] his eyes" and notices "a…bellying in the snow…so slight" it is "nearly invisible" (40). Saul is only eight years old, yet with Naomi's guidance he develops a spiritual ritual that enables him to connect with the natural environment, and this enables him to sense the spirits of his

ancestors. Saul identifies the remnants of Shaboogeesick's old trail, cut nearly a century earlier, that lies buried under snow, and they continue on their way.

Shabogeesick's trail leads Saul and Naomi to a "railroad…platform," but they are unable to travel further (41-42). Naomi freezes to death protecting Saul to her last breath, and the "canvas shawl" covering them is spotted before Saul, too, dies (42). Saul is "lifted" from Naomi's frozen embrace, and carefully placed into the backseat of a "car" where the effects of "[t]he heat and [his] exhaustion" send him into unconsciousness (42). Saul is not forcibly removed from his family to attend residential school like his siblings, and his parents, but the destructive legacies of residential schools are directly responsible for the disruption of his family that results in him becoming an orphan.

Saul is taken to St. Jerome's Indian Residential School, a place Saul describes as "hell on earth" (78). Saul looks back on his childhood and believes that everything he knew "of Indian" life "died" when he was "eight years old" (8). His parents abandon him, his brother and grandmother die, and he is placed in an alien environment that "smell[s] of bleach and disinfectant" (44). Saul's life in St. Jerome's is horrific.

Saul's integration into St. Jerome's is immediate, and involves a cleansing process aimed at taking away the physical signs of his cultural identity in a manner that is both damaging and demeaning to his humanity. Saul is "ordered to strip and climb into [a] tub…of nearly scalding water," and forced to remain there for a full "minute" before being disinfected with "handfuls of delousing power" that a priest throws at him from a safe distance (44). Bev Sellars recalls that "DDT" was used at her residential school to "delouse" the children, and that the caustic powder "stung [her] eyes and tasted awful" (32). DDT was

"banned in Canada…[i]n the early 1970's…because it was proven harmful to animals" (32). Nuns scrub the toxic powder from Saul's skin "with stiff-bristled brushes," and Saul feels like they are "trying to remove more than grime or odour" (44). Saul is then provided with low quality, ill-fitting school clothing, and his "long, straight hair" is "shaved…with electric clippers" (44-45). This initiation process removes the superficial indicators of Saul's Ojibway identity to prepare him for assimilation into mainstream colonial society; nevertheless, Saul retains Naomi's cultural education.

Saul's description of the oppressive conditions inside St. Jerome's is detailed, and involves a wide range of dehumanizing, and even life threatening conditions. Saul quickly recognizes these dangers, and avoids some of the more severe forms of punishment. One of these punishments is called "Contrition" (51). It involves the sustained confinement of children for a period up to "ten days" in a metal "box," called the "Iron Sister," located "in the basement" where the temperature turns breath to "ice fog" year-round (48-52). The box is so restrictive that "even the smallest child" cannot stand, "or even kneel" when placed inside, and children can be sent there for any number of minor infractions (80). Saul remembers how the nuns punish one girl in this manner for seeking the comfort of her elder sister. A similar form of punishment is described in *A National Crime*: "For her disobedience, Christine claimed that she had been locked in a "cold and dark" room, fed bread and water and beaten "with a strap, sometime on the face. And sometimes [they] took[her] clothes off and beat [her]" (Milloy 143). A young boy named "Shane Big Canoe" dies during "his second trip" to the Iron Sister (Wagamese, *Indian*, 51-52).

Saul recalls the various ways children die at St. Jerome's. One boy is killed in an unsafe work incident. His "head" is "split open in front of" the other children when the

"chain" used to wrap around a stump "snap[s]" as it is being pulled by "a tractor" (80). The children who witness this death are traumatized by the event, and are given no opportunity to process their friend's death because there is no "funeral" for the child, "[h]is body just disappear[s]" without a word ever mentioned about him again (80). Saul watches children "die of tuberculosis, influenza, pneumonia and broken hearts" (55). Some are returned to the school "frozen solid" after trying to run away in the dead of winter, and one child uses a "pitchfork" to end the suffering St. Jerome's causes him (55). A girl even fills her "pockets…with rocks," and drowns herself in the bottom of a "creek" to escape the horrors of St. Jerome's (55). Life is so horrendous in residential school that many children are willing to die to escape. Yet the children that do die while attending St. Jerome's are quietly "buried" in "unmarked graves" in an area near the edge of the property, a place the children nickname "The Indian Yard" (50). For many children, there is no escape.

The supervisory staff at St. Jerome's treated the children like criminals. The "nuns and priests" feed the children "tasteless porridge,…dry toast and…powdered milk" for breakfast, yet they "dine on "eggs, bacon," and "sausage" only a few "table[s] away," and if the children are caught trying to "sneak…a peek" at the nun's and priest's food, they are physically punished (79). The nuns and priests use public beatings, and the ever-present threat of death, to induce an environment of fear aimed at creating an atmosphere of absolute control over the children.

The school works the children like animals, or slaves, allowing them only one hour of "classroom" instruction each day in the most "rudimentary arithmetic and English" so that the rest of their waking hours can be filled with religious indoctrination, and manual labour designed to profit St. Jerome's, but not the children (78-80). The girls work in the "kitchen"

to reduce labour costs, and "bake…bread" that is "sold in town" (79). The boys "harvest…vegetables," they are not allowed to eat, and build "furniture the priests [sell] to the people of White River" for profit (79). Child labour was used in many residential schools to "subsid[ize]…the school budget" (Miller 169). The schools' argument was that "[w]ork" was a part of the student's education, but this resulted in the children "being [turned into] slaves" (169). The children's duties "often swelled to encompass a significant" portion of the time allotted to education, and this transformed the schools "into workhouse[s]" (170-171).

Saul remembers how the children were made "old before" their "time" with "incessant labour," and inhumane treatment (Wagamese, *Indian*, 81). St. Jerome's "scrape[s] away" at the children, "leaving holes in [their] beings," and Saul cannot grasp how the god that the nuns and priests proclaim is almighty can "watch…over" them, and yet "turn his head away and ignore such cruelty and suffering" (52).

The residential school's oppressive environment contrasts starkly with the traditional ways many Aboriginal cultures raise and teach their children. Miller describes a typical Aboriginal child's early education: "the shaping of behavior by positive example in the home, the provision of subtle guidance towards desired forms of behavior through the use of games, [and] a heavy reliance on the use of stories for didactic purposes" (17). Residential schools broke the spirits of many children, and in some instances children ran away from the schools, or committed suicide to escape their horrific existence. School supervisors were also directly responsible for the death of some children. Saul remembers witnessing a "ten" year old boy named "Curtis White Fox" die after having "his mouth washed out with lye soap for speaking Ojibway….in the classroom" (48). St. Jerome's traumatizes Saul, and the many children sent there to be assimilated into colonial society.

Saul responds to St. Jerome's by "draw[ing] the boundaries of [his] physical self inward" into a "chrysalis of silence," which he then fills with English literature (48-49). Saul's father teaches Saul to read English the same time he learns Ojibway because he believes his son will need this skill to survive, and Saul enters St. Jerome's with a reading level that surpasses the school's expectations for children old enough to leave the school. Thus, the "nuns and…priests…encourage" Saul in his literary escapism, but the other children treat Saul like "an outsider" because of his ability to speak and read English, ostracizing him, and calling him "*Zhaunagush*" 'white man' (48-49). This further isolates Saul, and he responds by "vanish[ing] even further into [his] self-imposed exile," (48-49). Reading helps Saul survive the loneliness of St. Jerome's, but increases his isolation from others, and deprives him of the support of healthy relationships with his fellow students, which increases his vulnerability.

Saul "retreat[s]" into himself to survive (55). He "vow[s]…never" to let anyone "hear" him "cry," choosing instead to "ache…in solitude," and offer others only the image of "a quiet, withdrawn boy" who is "void of feeling" (55). This changes, however, when Saul discovers the game of hockey. Many residential school survivors state "that sports helped them make it through residential school" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 110). Residential school survivor Noel Starblanket remembers that he "really enjoyed sports" because "that's what kept [him] alive,…what kept [him] going" (110-111). Hockey brings positive change to St. Jerome's, and the game gives Saul the strength to "walk the dim hallways," and evade "the hopeless chill air…of the school" (Wagamese, *Indian*, 66). Hockey gives Saul the ability to move beyond survival, to experience what it is like to thrive in life, despite the oppressive environment of St. Jerome's.

Similarly, Bev Sellars recalls how "skating in the winter," on an "outdoor rink," was one of the few times "the girls and boys were allowed to mix without any real restrictions," and how her "older brother" was able to "teach her how to skate" (77). Sellars recalls how one evening she was "standing by the rink boards watching all the kids skating" on the ice, "having a great time," how she can see "the stars" shining above "the floodlights," and how "magical…it [all] felt" (77-79).

Saul is too young to join the hockey team when he first arrives at St. Jerome's because he is too young. However, his participation in the wild rice harvest at Gods Lake instills in him the value of hard work, and the importance of responsibility. Boys are typically twelve when they perform the harvest, but Saul is only seven years old when Naomi initiates him and his brother into the harvest ceremony. The harvest teaches Ojibway "boys…to be men, to be responsible," and Saul carries this lesson with him when he convinces coach Father Leboutilier to let him clean the ice and prepare the players' equipment until he is old enough to play (Wagamese, *Indian*, 28). Saul's confidence and drive are intrinsically connected to his early cultural education.

One of Saul's jobs is to clean the ice each day for the team, and he develops a "ritual of shoveling" in the early morning hours that "open[s] the doors to a magical kingdom" (63). He secretly uses these early morning hours to practice his hockey skills, developing the stick handling and skating techniques he learns from books, and from watching "television" in Father Leboutilier's private "quarters" (57). Saul also mentally practices his hockey skills in the quiet of the dormitory at night while the other children are "asleep," enhancing his ability to visualize, a key component in his gift of sight (62). Saul is prepared to prove his worth as a player when the opportunity arrives, and he succeeds in convincing the coach, the other

players, and the head priest at the school that he deserves to play the game despite his age and diminutive size. Naomi's cultural education instills in Saul traits that enable him to develop his gift, and excel at hockey, a game that not only provides Saul with friendship, but also an early exit from St. Jerome's.

However, the game of hockey connects to what is arguably the most traumatic aspect of Saul's childhood: sexual molestation. Father Leboutilier grants Saul the responsibility "of cleaning the ice," and he promises Saul that when he is older he will play on the hockey team, but in return Saul must remain "silen[t]" about being sexual abused by the priest (198). Saul suggests that the most "terrify[ing]" abuse the children suffer at St. Jerome's is sexual assault, and the children "never" speak of these "nighttime invasions" because they do not want to "cause further shame" (81). Saul focuses whole-heartedly on the game of hockey. He develops a survival mechanism through his love for the game that effectively "shelter[s]" him from his memories of Father Leboutilier's abuse by distracting his mind and suppressing these traumatic events (199).

Hockey also helps Saul move beyond an isolated mode of survival. He thrives as a player, and enjoys the friendships of his teammates. Saul excels in an atmosphere that offers a healthy sense of community. He is a talented and generous hockey player and can score at will. Yet he also uses his gift of sight, and the physical skills he develops in training, to help his teammates score as well. Saul, like Shabogeesick, uses his gift for the betterment of his community, and this act of generosity strengthens his relationships with his teammates. Saul understands the importance of teamwork in hockey.

Saul's healthy relationship with his teammates helps him withstand the brutal pressures of racism that exist in the game of hockey during the 1960's and 70's in Canada. He first experiences racism in hockey when he is "thirteen" years old (88). A "midget town team" recruits Saul, despite being three to four years younger than the other players in the league, because of Saul's considerable talent on the ice (88). Saul is the only Aboriginal player in the town league, and although he continues to give himself "to the game utterly" the parents of the other players are uncomfortable with their sons being outplayed by an "Indian" (88-92). Saul does not develop strong relations with his teammates, and he struggles to understand why the white town community behaves like they "hate" him (92). He wonders why being good at hockey is not good enough (92). Saul continues to play for St. Jerome's hockey team, but he feels "defeated" because the level of play no longer challenges him (93). This changes when he is permitted to leave St. Jerome's and live with an Ojibway family to "attend a regular school," and play for an Aboriginal "tournament team" (94-97).

Saul is initially "scared" to leave St. Jerome's to live with the Kelly family in a "mining" town called Manitouwadge (97-99). The town is separated by "an invisible line" with about "thirty…Ojibway families" living on one side, and "tough, narrow-minded men and their loyal women and their callow kids," living on the other side in "[t]he town proper" (99). Saul is aware of this division, but the Kelly family, the Ojibway community, and the game of hockey provides Saul with a "real home" experience that helps insulate him from the pressures of this racism (95-97). Virgil also helps Saul overcome his initial "fright" of the new public school system, and Saul thrives in the atmosphere of the "Native tournaments" that are hosted on "reserve" communities "across the territory" (94-114). His adolescent years with the Kellys are some of the happiest of his life.

The weekend tournaments reveal the healthy sense of community and serve to unite each team "together in a way that nothing else" can, and "players and fans alike huddle...against" the cold weather, and "celebrate every goal, every hit, every pass" (110-111). Saul's team unity is strengthened by these weekend tournaments, as are the Aboriginal communities that host them. Each community provides food and shelter for the visiting teams, and becomes an extended home for the players (109). Saul's adolescent years in Manitouwadge heal the disruption created in St. Jerome's, and help remind him of his Ojibway identity.

Fred mentors Saul. He purposely duplicates game situations in practice, creating scenarios where Saul is double and triple teamed, so that he will be familiar with the pressure opposing teams will place on him (114-115). Saul uses his vision to overcome these tactics, and Virgil tells Saul that watching him play is "like watching [someone] walk into a secret place that no one else knows how to get to" (115). Hockey strengthens Saul's gift of sight, and within the safety of his team environment Saul learns to use the power of "emotion" to access his "vision," enabling him to realize his "longing for [the] purity of motion, [and] the freedom that the game" provides (115).

Saul develops his natural ability as a leader while playing hockey. He leads his team to "ten" tournament victories out of the "fifteen" they attend, his style of play changes the way his team plays the game. His Moose teammates are no longer led "around by the nose" as they chase after the puck, but skate for "open ice at every opportunity,…trusting that a teammate" will pass them the puck, and provide "another golden chance to score" (116). Manitouwadge provides Saul with a safe environment to grow, and he thrives with the support of his team, and his extended Ojibway family.

However, Saul's happiness dissolves when his team is lured into playing against the settler town teams in their "big money tournaments" (132). Saul remembers the racial hatred of the parents of the town midget teams, and he does not want "to play" outside of the Aboriginal tournaments, but he cannot "curb the…enthusiasm" of his teammates (120-121). They want to win the money these tournaments offer, but they also feel the need to prove they can play hockey as well as anyone. Saul agrees to play against the settler teams only because he believes his team will lose without him, and he wants to spare his friends the feeling of being "defeated" by people who think Aboriginal people do not deserve to play the game of hockey (120-121). Saul sacrifices himself for his team, however.

He takes it upon himself to prove to the settler teams and townsfolk that "Indians" can "skate," and "play the game" as well as anyone (130). He uses his "speed" and skill to outplay the town teams despite their "cheap hit[s]" but over time the racism they experience outside the game of hockey takes its toll on Saul, and his teammates (130-132). During one game a town team player hits Saul "from behind," and the Moose clear their bench in his defense, resulting in an "out-and-out brawl" between the two teams (131). The Moose can handle the racist violence on the ice. However, as the Moose leave the ice the townspeople in the crowd throw "[g]arbage" on Saul and his teammates, urinate and defecate in their "dressing room," and "slash" the "tires" of their team "van" (131). The racial "hatred" they endure outside the rink takes its toll on Saul and his teammates, and Saul watches as his friends lose their joy for the game, transforming them from "jubilant boys" into "taciturn men" (131). Saul responds by heightening his "keen sense of vision," and carrying the Moose to victory after victory, despite the hatred they encounter on and off the ice (131).

The most violent depiction of racism in the novel occurs when Saul and his team stop at a café for a bite to eat after winning a big tournament. Several townsmen from an adjoining bar recognize Saul and his teammates. These men force each Moose player, one at a time, into the back alley, and then gang up on the Ojibway boys, beating them nearly unconscious before urinating on them (133-136). The townsmen spare Saul because of his small size, and his considerable talent as a hockey player, but they warn Saul to "remember [his] place" because he may not be "so lucky" the "[n]ext time" (135). The threat of physical and psychological violence is ever present when Saul and his team play in the town tournaments, replicating the constant threat of violence that exists in residential schools.

Virgil confesses to Saul that the most traumatizing element about the event was that "'[t]here was no yelling, no cussing, no nothing," that the men were "silent," as though "it was an everyday thing" (136). These men act unconscionably, and this is what is most frightening. They treat Saul's teammates worse than animals. Their abusers exhibit no remorse, and feel justified in their reprehensible actions. They attempt to dehumanize Saul's teammates, and the event has a lasting effect on the team. Virgil has never attended a residential school, and he tells Saul that he "never knew people could be that cold" (136). Saul's teammates burn with "shame,…hurt,...[and] rage," but they are prevented from processing their emotions (136). They are not able to respond to the violence they experience at the café because the townsmen are stronger, more numerous, and their society supports this racial inequality. Saul and his team never even tell anyone about the event, and it drives each of them more intensely in their desire to prove they can beat the best of the settler town teams. Saul's teammates channel their silent pain into aggression on the ice. Their games

become increasingly violent, and anger permeates all aspects of their lives while on these road trips.

Saul extends his vision beyond the confines of the game after the incident at the café, and he "notice[s]…a line in every arena" (137). He realizes how the "Indian fans" and the "white ones" are kept "separate," like in Manitouwadge (137). He also notices how some opposing players will "not remove their hockey gloves to shake" hands after the games, and others "refus[e] to shake hands" at all (137). Saul mentions this to Virgil, but Virgil just "scowls," and elicits Saul's help to prove they can beat the "white" teams in their "white" arenas (137). Virgil internalizes the violence he experiences, and he uses his anger to lead the Moose into struggle against the townsfolk that alters the nature of the game of hockey. The rink becomes a battleground where players are no longer playing to win, but fighting to prove their self-worth, and this corrupts the joy they once felt while playing the game.

The townspeople are responsible for the debasement of the game. They are in a position of power because they own the towns and the arenas, and host the tournaments. They represent the settler culture that makes the rules that have controlled Aboriginal people's rights for over a century, and they abuse their position of power to appease their fragile egos by manifesting their racist cruelty upon a team of adolescent boys. The townspeople cannot accept losing to Saul and the Moose so they use racist violence to try and defeat the spirits of the Ojibway boys.

Virgil is the team caption, but Saul is the player who leads the team with his gift. Virgil and the others try to convince Saul to "[h]it…back," to return the violence the opposing players abuse Saul with, but Saul refuses, telling them, "That's not my game"

(141). The referees do not call penalties for illegal hits on Saul, and this encourages the town teams to become increasingly violent towards Saul on the ice. He loses his ability to access "his vision" because of the accumulated punishment, and his teammates refuse to look him in the "eye" in the dressing room after they lose a game, but Saul refuses to "surrender" to anger (141-143). He knows that responding with violence will corrupt the beauty and "joy" the game gives him (143). He knows that "the game [is] his life," but is unaware at the time that without hockey he will be forced to face the pain of his past (144). Saul is fighting to survive, and he returns to the ice, defies the taunts of the crowd, and "reclaim[s] the game" he both loves and needs (144). Saul digs deep within himself, regains access to his gift, and plays at a level that no one else can touch. He endures the physical assaults of his opponents, out works and out plays each team, and continues to lead the Moose to victory (145). Saul inspires his teammates, and together they overcome "the negativity from the crowds and the other teams" by channeling the racial hatred into "excel[ling]" at the game instead of resorting to violence (145). They become "champions," and prove "that the game belong[s]" to them as well (145). Saul accomplishes this because he is not alone. He embraces the desires of his team to prove they are as good as any town team, and together they succeed.

Saul's teammates are an important part of his family and community. Although they try to get him to fight back, and even deny him eye contact following a loss on the ice, their friendship helps Saul access the strength he needs to overcome the pressures of racism without violence. Saul's brotherly bond with his teammates elicits a responsibility within Saul to hold fast to the beauty of the game of hockey. Saul helps his team prove to themselves that they are worthy of the game, and he succeeds in keeping the memories of his childhood trauma suppressed.

This changes, however, when Saul's hockey talents are recognized by a "scout" from the Toronto Maple "Leafs," and he has the opportunity to pursue a professional hockey career (145). Saul does not establish healthy relationships with his new teammates, and this disrupts the joy the game creates for him. Saul does not want to leave Manitouwadge. He wants to remain a Moose, and play only in the Aboriginal reserve tournaments, but his teammates pressure him to at least try and play in the NHL. They claim Saul "owe[s]" it to them to at least try, and Saul relents. He chooses once more to sacrifice his own personal interests for that of the group. Virgil says to Saul, "You're a shape-shifter, Saul. We all know that. The NHL never seen a shape-shifter before. Believe me, you'll be good enough" (154). Saul's teammates want to live vicariously through Saul's success because he represents the acknowledgement of their own Ojibway identity (154). Saul moves to Toronto, and makes the cut during the farm team tryouts. He excels, but without the support of his team, Saul cannot withstand the pressures of racism he encounters on and off the ice.

Saul has "a puck sense" few players ever achieve, and with the physical abilities he develops over the years he has the potential to play in the NHL. However, he struggles with the racism of the crowds and the media. They focus on his Aboriginal identity instead of his skills on the ice. The referees continue to ignore the illegal slashes and hits the other players use to try to stop Saul's success. But Saul's teammates' "indifference" towards him "hurt[s]" Saul the most (163). Saul's will to maintain the beauty of the game he loves breaks without the support of a community.

Saul is alone in a world that accepts racial intolerance as normal. He is a generous hockey player, and he continues to use his gift to help the other players on his team, setting up plays, and passing the puck for others to score to improve his team's success. His

teammates eagerly accept his "passes," but they use Saul for their own interests. They do not honor Saul, or his contributions to the team (163). Saul's teammates are from privileged settler communities, and they do not accept Saul as a teammate because he is Aboriginal (163). Their disrespect for him is evident by their referral to him as "Thirteen" instead of speaking to him directly, and using his name: "'Thirteen don't talk much.' 'I heard they're like that'" (162). These dehumanizing racist attitudes are derived from a colonial culture that supports the abusive policies of the Indian Act (162). Settler cultural attitudes towards Aboriginal people are influenced by the history of a "colonial regime" that controls "Indian identity" through "policies…designed to subjugate the Indian population" for its own ends (Emberley 27-29). Saul's teammates' behavior reflects Canada's societal attitude towards Aboriginal peoples. Emberley points out, "Inequality has become 'naturalized' in contemporary Canada" (28-29). A large percentage of the settler population does not "question the existence of the paternalistic *Indian Act*, which controls every aspect of the lives of status Indians," and this attitude manifests in society in ways like Wagamese's depictions of racism in *Indian Horse* (28-29).

Saul's life is "desolat[e]" without the support of a community (Wagamese, *Indian*, 163). He "walks the streets of the city" by himself, and is surrounded by uncaring strangers (163). He excels as a player on the ice, but his teammates keep "eight inches" between themselves and Saul on the bench, "announcing to everyone that [Saul is] different, and that [he is] not welcome even" on his "own" team (164). Saul is pushed past his coping threshold when his own "teammates…laugh" after an opposing player violently "slashes" him after the play stops (164-165). The "racism of the crowds and players" corrupts the joy of the game for Saul (163-164). They "tak[e] away" the "only protection" he has against the "truth of the

abuse and the rape of [his] innocence" (199). He "explodes" with rage and embraces the racist agenda of the media, "giv[ing] them" the "savage" they want by attacking the opposing team with his "fist[s]" (164-165). Saul responds to his abuse with violence because he is alone, and has no one to help remind him of the responsibilities of a healthy community.

Saul adopts what Allison Piche describes as the "[h]ypermasculinity and toxic masculinity" performances associated with "a specific kind of masculine identity" (203). Piche draws from McKegney's article, "Warriors, Healers, Lovers and Leaders," to explain how Aboriginal men often struggle with how to "negotiate" the "hegemonic, toxic, and racialized definitions of manhood" to "define themselves against colonized masculinities" (203). Saul feels that his only option is to embrace the media's portrayal of him as "the Rampaging Redskin" (Wagamese, *Indian*, 165). McKegney addresses how Aboriginal men are "[m]arginalized through colonial experiences and stripped of power and autonomy," and how "popular culture's toxic images of Indigenous masculinity" often influences Aboriginal men to "seek power through domination and violence rather than through communal responsibility" (Piche 204). Saul's first impulse is to embrace his community, and contribute towards the betterment of his adoptive family, but when he is deprived of the support of a healthy community he incorporates the toxic expression of masculinity that is thrust upon him by the media, the crowds, and even his own teammates.

Saul's hypermasculinity becomes his new coping strategy. He uses physical violence to release his anger, and distract himself from the trauma of his childhood. He becomes a "bitter" player, fighting at every opportunity, and he also stops passing the puck to his teammates (Wagamese, *Indian*, 165). Saul transforms into a selfish player, and this further corrupts the game he loves. He does not have the support of a team, and his coach benches

him indefinitely when his accumulated penalty minutes from fighting causes the team to lose games. Saul responds by gathering his belongings and boarding the next "bus back to Manitouwadge" (166).

Saul's habit of running away from his problems becomes another unhealthy coping strategy. He chooses to leave when he encounters a situation that threatens to remind him of his childhood trauma, and this isolates him from others who may offer support. Saul avoids people because they remind him of his pain and discomfort. But he is unable to run away from himself. Saul's painful memories follow him, and his refusal to connect with others and addresses his past place him on a path that leads to loneliness.

Saul does reestablish his relationship with nature. He leaves Manitouwadge, and the comforts of the Kelly home soon after he arrives, to work in a "logging camp" (172). He feels "cocooned," protected and connected to "Time, mystery, departure and union," all at once when he is alone in the bush (172-173). Nature reminds him of "what it mean[s] to be…Ojibway," and he remembers Naomi's stories (173). He spends the early morning hours in the forest while the other loggers are still asleep, and it feels like a "ritual….[a] ceremony, ancient and simple and personal," like the mornings when he cleared the ice as a child at St. Jerome's (173). The bush brings Saul a sense of peace and serenity.

However, Saul also embraces his childhood survival mechanism of self-induced isolation, and this makes the men Saul works with uncomfortable. The loggers are mostly "northern men, Finns, Swedes, Germans, Quebecois and Russians," who have not had an Aboriginal "in their midst before" (173) They respond to their discomfort by engaging in racist bullying, calling Saul "'Chief' and 'Tonto,'" and increasing Saul's workload in

physical and demeaning ways (173-174). Saul initially ignores their abusive behavior, but when one of the men makes a "crude…gesture" towards Saul in the "bunk" house "one night" Saul responds with violence, quickly silencing the man by firmly grasping his throat, striking him "in the head," and knocking him unconscious (172-175). He turns to the other men, hoping to release more of the "frigid blackness" that burns inside of him, but no one else steps forth, and Saul resumes his quiet, private ways (172-175). Saul initially avoids others, but when he is pushed past his coping threshold he resorts to his other strategy, violence. Saul becomes a "hard" young man (176). He keeps to himself to suppress the anger that burns within him from escaping, but his violent nature remains close to the surface, and he brings this "intensity" with him when he returns to Manitouwadge.

Saul plays hockey with the Moose again, but the "blackness" he tries to suppress is released upon both his "white," and Aboriginal opponents (176). Saul no longer finds sanctuary in hockey because the racism he experiences in Toronto corrupts the game for him, even when he is supported by his adoptive Manitouwadge community. Saul fights at every opportunity, and his violent nature pushes his friends away. Saul believes he has lost "the game" he loves "forever," and he resorts to his strategy of leaving (176). He loads his belongings into his truck, and drives away at the end of the hockey season. He chooses a life of self-induced isolation on the road, and immerses himself in work, music, and literature.

These coping strategies "sustain" Saul "for a long time" (179). He does "not offer" friendship to those he meets, and he suppresses the rage that threatens to erupt when the hideous nature of racism pushes against his protective shell of isolation, yet in time he yearns once more for the sounds of "banter," and the "gutter talk and the teasing" of the "dressing rooms[s]" of his youth (179-180). He longs for a sense of community, and eventually begins

visiting “taverns” to “sit and listen” to men “jibe…back and forth” (180). Saul seeks comfort in the bars when isolation fails him, and this environment introduces Saul to another unhealthy coping mechanism: alcohol.

Saul cannot remember reaching for his first drink, but he never forgets the soothing effect “alcohol” has on “the roaring” that burns inside him (181). Alcohol is also an “antidote” for Saul’s loneliness (180-181). He enjoys how alcohol frees him from his self-induced “exile,” and enables him to “become…a raconteur” who tells “stories about madcap travels and events” that he spins from the many books he has read (181). Saul enjoys pretending to be “someone” else because it helps him forget his pain (181). He becomes “[a]ddicted” to this “new” form of “escape,” and “drift[s]” from place to place as the “years” pass, surviving as “a high-functioning drunk,” but eventually the alcohol “snares” him, and he deteriorates into a “drooling…caricature” that is “avoid[ed]” by others, confining him once again to a state of unrelenting loneliness (180-181). Alcohol provides momentary relief, but leaves the addict worse off in the long run. Saul loses his capacity to hold a steady job, and is reduced to “cadging drinks” in a “workingman’s bar” (182). Saul’s primary coping strategy is alcohol; it “lets [Saul] go on breathing but not really living,…move but not remember,…do but not feel” (217).

Saul is “tired” of his life (182). He wants to change, and he meets Ervin Sift, a non-Aboriginal farmer, in a bar. Ervin offers to help Saul in exchange for Saul’s sobriety, and, in time, Saul’s story. Ervin provides Saul with work, lodging, food, and friendship. Saul finds “a degree of comfort” in his life with Ervin (184). Saul also reconnects with nature for the first time since working in the logging camp. Saul walks into “the bush” beyond Ervin’s property, and the “silence…of the land” calms him, but his “rage” drives Saul back to alcohol

(186-187). Saul and Ervin are friends. Ervin nurses Saul back to health, and tries to help Saul overcome his past, but Saul cannot share his story with Ervin. He fears his anger will surface, and he will harm his friend and then "be truly alone….Forever" (187). Saul is afraid of confronting his past, and he uses his coping strategies to distance himself from this threat. He begins drinking again, and then leaves Ervin and his farm to return to his life of addiction and loneliness. Saul wants to change his life, but he is unable to initiate a journey of healing with Ervin's support.

There are several possible reasons why Saul sabotages his opportunity to heal while living with his friend. Ervin is a "widower," and he is processing his own grief (184). He also has no children, and needs Saul's company as much as Saul needs his help. Their relationship is friendly, but mutually dependent, and this is not necessarily conducive to healing. Saul also feels obligated to share his story with Ervin. He wants to tell his story to his friend, but the element of expectation, as if Saul's story is somehow a form of repayment, indicates an unhealthy dynamic in their relationship. Ervin also represents the settler identity that is responsible for Saul's life traumas: the destruction of his family; St. Jerome's; the racism he experiences while playing hockey. Saul's fear that his anger will surface violently towards Ervin is a valid concern. Saul's decision to leave Ervin's farm indicates the level of respect, and appreciation he has for his friend, but suggests that the bond of two lonely men does not constitute a healthy community that can support the healing Saul requires.

Saul is alone again, and his addiction to alcohol continues to leads him down a path of self-destruction. He lives, figuratively, "at the bottom of…[a] well" where there is no thought or "emotion," a life seemingly beyond "hope" (189). Saul "collapse[s]" on the street because of a "seizure" caused by his long-term abuse of alcohol, and fortunately for him this near-

death incident forces him to recover in a hospital (190). Saul instinctually agrees to participate in the healing program at "the New Dawn Centre" (191). When he begins writing his life story in private he is surprised at how easily the words "spill…out" (191). He is ready to face his past, and heal the traumas of his childhood. He remembers Naomi's cultural education. He is reminded of his Ojibway identity, and Naomi's stories help guide him on his healing journey (191).

However, Saul stops writing when his story reaches the point of his "long, dark downward spiral" into addiction (190-191). Saul becomes frustrated when his healing process seems to stop, and he seeks the "solace…[of] the bush" (191). He comes across a "family of beavers" working on their "lodge," and he spends his days observing this community at work (191-192). Saul is captivated by the beavers, and then one night he camps beside the "pond" because it is too late to return to the Centre (191-192). Shabogeesick's spirit visits Saul in his sleep, and Saul is reunited with the spirits of his ancestors (191-192). Saul's vision helps him release his suppressed emotions, and he "crie[s]" for the first time since Naomi's death (193).

Saul is supported by the community of life that surrounds him when he is at the pond. He is comforted by the natural elements. He establishes a respectful relationship with a healthy community of beavers. He is near water, and he lights a fire, and keeps it burning through the night. Saul is not alone, even though he is not accompanied by another person. Anishinabe Elders identify the elements that surround Saul as important to the health of their people. Saul reconnects with his emotional life, in part, because these elements provide the support he needs. Saul expresses his suppressed emotions, and this release gives him the clarity to perceive what step he next needs to take on his healing journey.

He remains awake through the night, and then leaves the Centre, "but this time [he knows] exactly where [he is] going:" St. Jerome's and Gods Lake, the locations of his childhood trauma (193). Saul "know[s]" that to heal his past he needs to revisit these sites to address his childhood trauma (194). People who visit the places where they experience trauma can potentially connect more viscerally with their painful memories. Victims can then use this experience to process their trauma, but there is also the risk that revisiting these places can re-traumatize the individual, and cause further harm. Fortunately, Saul remembers Naomi's cultural education, and he uses his gift to guide him in his healing process. Saul also informs his councilor at the Centre of his plans, and Saul realizes that he can return to the Centre when he is ready to resume their healing program.

Saul arrives at St. Jerome's, and he observes the destruction other survivors have inflicted upon the buildings. He leans on "the boards" of the abandoned ice rink of his youth, and he listens to the sounds of the "birds calling in the trees at the edge of the field" (197-198). He opens himself to the natural environment, and accesses his gift of vision. He "close[s]" his "eyes" and the memories of his youth surface (197). He first hears the joyful sounds of the children playing the game he loves, and he recalls the beauty of his sacred early morning ritual of clearing the ice. Saul "crie[s]" as he remembers this cleansing ritual, but as he connects to these joyful emotions darker memories surface as well (198). His emotional life is connected to his memories, both happy and traumatic, and he recalls his relationship with Father Leboutilier. He remembers how the priest used his vulnerability to repeatedly sexually molest him, and Saul's emotions become violent. Saul physically attacks the "rotting boards" of the rink in a cathartic release that harms no one (198-199).

Saul gains clarity each time he connects with his suppressed emotions, and then releases them. During this visit to St. Jerome's, he realizes that the game of hockey "sheltered" him from "the horror" of being abused, and provided him the means of "escap[ing]" the brutal reality of life at St. Jerome's (199). Saul also perceives that "the racism of the crowds and players" made him angry because their abuse threatened to "tak[e] away" his "only protection" from the painful memories of his past (199-200). He responds to this threat with "anger and rage and physical violence" to continue "block[ing]" these memories, but his anger is aimed at others, and this perpetuates the violent cycle of abuse (199-200). Saul's violent release of emotions at St. Jerome's is a healthy release of suppressed anger.

His next cathartic release of emotions occurs while he is on route to Gods Lake, the place his brother dies and his family abandons him. Saul travels by canoe along the river Naomi used to guide her family to their lake, and as Saul listens to the sounds of the water he is reminded of the stories Naomi shared with her family, of how this river feeds "the souls of" the Ojibway "people" (202). Saul camps overnight on a large island in the middle of the river, and he is comforted by the healing elements of "[t]he land," the river water, and the "fire" he builds (202). Saul once more recalls the traumatic memories of his past, particularly Father Leboutillier's abuse of his "innocence," and he violently erupts with rage and sorrow, screaming into the night air until he is hoarse, venting his anger onto the land until he is physically, and emotionally "drained" (202-203). Saul cools himself afterwards in the flow of the river, drinks deeply, and then returns to "the fireside" to sleep (201-202). Saul cleanses himself of the stagnant emotions he has suppressed for so long, and his spirit is then fed and

nurtured on the island amidst the river. The land has the capacity to absorb Saul's rage without perpetuating the cycle of violence.

Saul arrives at Gods Lake and he feels "as though [he] had never left" (204). His senses are filled with the sights, smells, and sounds of nature. He "close[s]" his "eyes" to access his vision, and when he opens them he is greeted by the spirits of his family, both close relations and "ancient" (204-205). Shaboogeesick speaks directly to Saul, telling him that Saul has "come far," that his "journey…is good," and that he has "come to learn to carry [Gods Lake] within" him as he journeys forth in life (205). The lake represents Saul's cultural heritage, and it is important for Saul to maintain a healthy sense of his Ojibway identity. Shabogeesick gifts Saul "a broad eagle feather fan in [his] left" hand, and "a hide pouch in [his] right" that is filled with "tobacco,…gaze[s]…kindly" at Saul, and is then "gone" (205). These material items are connected to the sacred ceremonial traditions of Saul's culture, and he uses them as he sees and hears the "low prayer[s]" of his "family" (206). Saul "offer[s]" his "thanks aloud in an Ojibway prayer" after he is gifted with further insight into his life, and the healing journey he continues (206).

Saul "mourn[s]" his own history and that of his people, and releases the last of his "sorrow and desperation, loneliness and regret" (205-206). As he "crie[s]" the last of his tears he hears his name. He looks up at the "[t]he moon" and sees joy and happiness expressed in "the thrill of the game" of hockey reflected in its glowing surface (206). This time Saul is gifted with a vision of clarity that shows him his path in life: he is to return to Manitouwadge, embrace the game he loves, and focus on the future generations of Ojibway children. Saul sees that he is to share his gift, and the knowledge of his culture, through the game he loves with the children of Manitouwadge.

Saul first goes to "the New Dawn Centre" treatment facility because he is aware of his need to continue working on his recovery before returning to his adoptive home (207). His childhood traumas are like "ghosts" that "linger," and can "lurch out" at any moment (207). He "learn[s] how to live…without drinking" at the Centre, and continues examining his life in detail, a process that "terrifie[s]" him, but gives him the "confidence" to share his life story with others so he can avoid the loneliness that nearly kills him (207). When Saul is "secure with [his] feelings, and [his] new set of skills," he returns to Manitouwadge to reconnect with his adoptive Ojibway community, and pursue his journey as a leader (207-208).

Fred and Martha Kelly welcome Saul into their home when he arrives, and Saul initiates a discussion of his painful past. Fred and Martha share their childhood experiences at St. Jerome's with Saul, and together they discuss their traumatic pasts. Martha reminds Saul that the "'rape'" they underwent involves more than "sexual" molestation, that each Indian Residential School survivor's "spirit" was "invade[d]," raped by these institutions of enforced assimilation (210). Fred informs Saul that their painful history is not their "responsibil[ity]," but the "healing" process is, that it is "a long game," but if Saul "keep[s his] stick on the ice and [his] feet moving," then "Time will take care of itself" (210). Communication is an essential component of Saul's treatment program, and Saul takes one more step in his journey of healing when he shares openly with his adoptive guardians.

Saul confides with Fred and Martha that he wants "to…coach'" hockey instead of playing in the men's league, and they inform him that Virgil is "looking for a coach for his son's team (212). Saul's decision to coach children provides him with the possibility of reclaiming everything he loves about the game. Coaching is a natural expression of his role

as a community leader, and embodies Johnston's philosophical understanding of what it means to be Anishinaube / Ojibway, to be "always full of good intentions" (114).

Saul watches as Virgil coaches the boys, and he enjoys "the excitement in [their young] voices" while they "scrimmage" (213). He approaches Virgil afterwards, and after sitting quietly with his friend he tells Virgil, for the first time, his life story. Saul confesses that although he "still hurts," he now understands that there are better ways of "dealing with" the pain than "running, abandoning people, fighting, [and] drinking" (217). Saul tells Virgil that he has come "home" to Manitouwadge to find "a job, [and]…coach," so he can "get back the joy of the game" by sharing his gift with children whose future is ahead of them (217-218). Saul understands that by giving to others he will, in return, receive what he most needs in his life. This is one of the essential components of a healthy community, contributing to the health of one's own community benefits everyone. Another component of a healthy community is open, honest communication. Saul's ability to do these two things indicates that he is healing from his childhood trauma, and becoming one of the cultural leaders his community needs to ensure a healthy future.

Saul's life represents an important stage in the recent history of Aboriginal peoples. He is the bridge through which culture is communicated intergenerationally, transmitting Ojibway knowledge and traditions from a time prior to colonization into contemporary society. Naomi provides this cultural knowledge in the form of oral tradition, and practical knowledge, and it is Saul's responsibility to share this knowledge with future generations. Naomi illustrates the important role Elders have for their communities, and Saul's return to Manitouwadge is a natural progression of this tradition of cultural continuity that is nearly destroyed because of residential schools.

Saul's life also represents the dark chapter of the Indian Residential School system, a period in colonial history aimed at achieving the cultural genocide of Canada's Aboriginal peoples. His early childhood survival mechanisms help him endure his residential school experience, but they continue to shape his life as he matures into adulthood, preventing him from the benefits of a healthy community when he most needs it.

Saul thrives as a child when he first discovers the game of hockey. He develops his gifts of sight, and leadership, as well as his athletic skills, but Saul's innocence is also further corrupted by his coach, and the personal trauma he endures nearly result in his death because of the unhealthy coping strategies he adopts in adulthood: violence; running away; and addiction to alcohol.

Indian Horse depicts the racism of colonial society. The townspeople's racism illustrates the behavior of a society that can condone oppressive institutions like the residential school system. Saul resists responding to the racist violence of settler society when he has the support of his community, but he reacts violently when this communal support is removed. His violence towards his abusers perpetuates the cycle of abuse, and results in further harm to Saul. He loses access to the game he loves. Saul's violent emotional release is healthy, however, when he vents his aggression upon the rotting boards of St. Jerome's ice rink, and the natural elements of the island in the river during his healing process. The natural elements help cleanse Saul of the toxic aggression he suppresses from his traumatic childhood.

The landscape is one of the many elements of the healthy community that helps Saul heal his traumatic childhood. The New Dawn Centre helps initiate Saul's journey of coming

home through his own story, and the adoptive community of Manitouwadge awaits his return, ready to provide the assistance he needs to heal.

Conclusion

Alexie's, Highway's, and Wagamese's novels convey "a proactive commitment to Native community" (Weaver xiii). These three novels express "the grief and sense of exile" of residential school survivors, and offer examples of individual and communal healing possibilities (xiii). Each author achieves this by describing the protagonist's healing processes, which include "the 'wider community' of Creation itself," and emphasize the importance of healthy relationships, and cultural continuity (xiii).

James Nathan's personal healing journey is just one part of the communal healing Alexie portrays in his novel. The people of Aberdeen address the legacy of trauma associated with the hostel together, and their reconnection to their ancestral traditions supports their communal healing experience. The novel's depiction of healing also includes non-Aboriginal community members Reverend Andy and his wife, illustrating the inclusive community involved in the healing process. The cremation ceremonies depict this most poignantly, incorporating the people, animals, land, weather, ancestral spirits, and the heavens into the experience. Highway focuses on the healing journeys of the Okimasis brothers, and their sibling relationship, rather than on their home community of Eemanapiteepitat, but their theatrical collaborations that help them heal also contribute to positive change that extend outwards, beyond their home community and theatrical community. The success of the Okimasis plays has, as McKegney suggests, the capacity to "provoke the self-exploration among their audience required to potentially alter [the] structures of power" that produced the residential schools in the first place (*Magic Weapons* 165). Wagamese's depiction of Saul's healing process is the most private of the three novels examined in this study. Yet Saul is not alone in his healing process. He is guided by the spirits of his ancestors, and is supported by

the sacred homeland of his people. During his sacred ritual at Gods Lake Saul connects with the heavens; he sees the image of children playing hockey on the surface of the moon, and understands his responsibility in life. Saul returns to his adoptive Ojibway community in Manitouwadge to share his gift with children through the game he loves and carry forth the healing knowledge he has acquired.

These three novels express the importance of healthy relations in the context of a healthy community. In the Aboriginal communities examined in this study, this sense of communal inclusion involves all of life: animals, landscape, spirit world, and beyond. King sums this concept of inclusion with his phrase, "All my relations:…the web of kinship extending to the animals, to the birds, to the fish, to the plants, to all the animate and inanimate forms that can be seen or imagined" ("Introduction ix). King sees this inclusive quality "as intricate webs of kinship that radiate from a Native sense of family" (xiv).

Steinhauer and Lamouche argue that "the restoration of…personal and community relationships" is the most important of the three themes relating to Aboriginal health: "land, language, and relations" (159). They cite Makokis and Bodor to highlight this point:

> Relationships are key in an Indigenous epistemology and ontology. Nothing exists outside of relationship. Knowledge does not and cannot exist without relationship between at least two beings….Without the relationships embedded in the circle, the knowledge cannot and does not exist; consequently attention to the sacredness of the relationships within the circle is tantamount. Creation and transmission of knowledge is a sacred trust. (Steinhauer and Lamouche 159)

The three novels examined in this study convey this transmission of sacred knowledge most poignantly through the expression of oral traditions. Simon J. Ortiz (Acoma Pueblo) states:

> The sense that [Aboriginal peoples] have always lived here is reiterated continually in oral narrative. The young are frequently reminded by their elders: these lands and waters and all elements of Creation are a part of you, and you are a part of them; you have a reciprocal relationship with them. (xiv)

The narrators of these three novels interfuse oral traditions to convey the relationship Aboriginal people have with the land their ancestors have lived on for millennia. These oral traditions also emphasize the inclusive nature of their respective Aboriginal community. For example, Alexie's Blue People share a special connection with the caribou and the wolf, Highway's Cree have a special connection with the manifest forms of their Spiritual Beings, and Wagamese's Ojibway have a duty to use their gifts for the betterment of their community.

Residential schools nearly destroyed this intergenerational transmission of sacred knowledge by disrupting familial and community relationships. Judith Herman points out, "the core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others" (94). She states that "recovery, therefore, is based upon the empowerment of the survivor and the creation of new connections," that "[r]ecovery can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation" (94). The male protagonists of this study increase their suffering when they further isolate themselves through their use of unhealthy survival and coping mechanisms, but they begin to heal once they actively engage in healthy relations with others in the context of their traditional cultures.

Weaver states that not only are the oral traditions vital in the creation of a healthy "sense of belonging," of "forming" one's "identity" in a communal sense, but that oral traditions are also important to the development of "a counter mythology to…European myths that serve colonial interests" (15). The oral traditions are a vital element in the healing

of traumas created by residential schools. Murdena Marshall states that "children need to know their ancestral teachings before *jumping without a parachute into another culture*," and that "[s]tories are the main vehicle of instruction and guidance and thus a vital tool at all stages of life development, but especially during the early years of childhood and adolescence where such guidance affects life choices" (21). Residential school survivors were denied this vital connection for extended periods of time, and this separation disrupted their capacity to make healthy life choices. Several generations of Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their families and home communities, creating a cycle of cultural dislocation that was repeated, and further complicated with each successive generation, producing enduring legacies of trauma. The regeneration of cultural continuity is a fundamental element of the Aboriginal healing processes currently taking place today.

The importance of cultural continuity, and the role community Elders have in ensuring future generations acquire their traditional knowledges cannot be overstated. This is evident in the three novels examined in this study. Abraham's stories guide Jeremiah and Gabriel, and Ann-Adele's version of the story of Chachagathoo is a pivotal moment in the lives of the Okimasis brothers. Jeremiah develops into an important community Elder, teaching his Cree language through the oral traditions, and his collaborations with Gabriel are also an important element of cultural transmission for future generations. Naomi's stories guide Saul throughout his life, and once Saul has achieved a certain level of healing, and is ready to return to his adoptive home of Manitouwadge, he too is ready to become an Elder and teach his Ojibway culture to children. The Blue People Elders guide the community of Aberdeen with their versions of their oral traditions, ensuring their cultural traditions and beliefs are passed onto future generations.

Many of the residential school survivors alive today are the community Elders who are healing from the destructive legacies of residential schools, and passing forth their cultural knowledge and beliefs through oral traditions and other culture specific practices, like the cremation ceremony depicted in *Porcupines and China Dolls*. These survivors were born during a period of "cross[ing]," a moving across a "border" separating the traditional ways of life prior to colonization, to that of the enforced transition of Aboriginal people into a contemporary society heavily informed by colonial ideology (Wagamese 2). Highway's Okimasis brothers' theatrical productions are an important example of the reinterpretation of oral traditions in modern society, as is Saul's application of his gift of sight to the game of hockey.

Residential schools were "vehicles of cultural genocide" that attempted "to destroy language and stories,…the wisdom of the 'Old Ones,'" but residential school "survivors…are," as McLeod points out, "modern day okicitawak (Worthy Men[/and Women] – 'warriors')," who "fight against the memories of these schools that linger in the landscapes of their souls" (29). Survivors are the bridges through which their culture is transmitted to future generations, and their capacity to heal from the traumas of their residential school experiences are vital to the health and continuance of Aboriginal communities today.

Each generation has a responsibility to pass their oral traditions forward onto the next generation, and, as Marshall, et al. state: "Traditional Knowledges were never meant to stay static and stay in the past. Rather, we must bring them into the present so that everything becomes meaningful in our lives and in our communities" (22). Emberley notes how the Okimasis brothers use "storytelling" to "recod[e] the representational violence of

colonization" that they experience (*Defamiliarizing* 254). The brothers utilize their "Indigenous epistemologies…to transform…the historical, transgenerational, and present-day consequences of the traumatic legacies of residential schooling" to "giv[e] rise to a reparative framework of cultural production and reception by reestablishing, while also reenvisioning, Indigenous cultural practices and values" (Emberley, *The Testimonial Uncanny*, 19).

Alexie, Highway, and Wagamese, like the characters they depict, embody this quality of reinterpreting the oral traditions of their Aboriginal cultures in the three novels examined in this study. Each author is, in Allen's words, "like oral storytellers" that are "writ[ing] out of [their] tribal traditions" (5). Their use of language is, as Momaday states, an attempt "to understand [their own] experience" (14). In this respect, Alexie, Highway and Wagamese are "superimpos[ing]" their "imagination[s]…upon the historical event" of their life experiences (15).

Both Alexie and Highway are residential school survivors, and Wagamese is a self-proclaimed "intergenerational victim of residential schools," an Aboriginal person who is traumatically impacted by his parents' survivor experience (Wagamese, "Returning to Harmony," 472). Wagamese's depiction of the oppressive environment of residential schools is the most detailed of the three novelists, and this can be attributed to his work "[a]s a writer and journalist" who has "spoke[n] to hundreds of residential school Survivors" (472). *Indian Horse* reads at times like a list of residential survivor accounts, conveyed through the eyes of Saul. All three novels share what Rymhs describes as the "mortification" of the first day of school, when each of the male protagonists are initiated into the process of assimilation into colonial society that endeavors to eliminate their "former means of self-identification," their surface Aboriginal identity (103). The authors, like their protagonists, use their cultural oral

traditions to, as McLeod states: "'come home' through stories and narrative memory" (184). These three novelists create literary works that inform their readers of the horrific colonial legacies, and provide possible solutions to heal the devastating intergenerational trauma these legacies have created.

Bibliography

Abrams, M. H. A Glossary of Literary Terms. 8th ed., Thomson Wadson, 2005.

Alexie, Robert Arthur. *Porcupines and China Dolls*. Theytus Books, 2009.

Allen, Paula Gunn. Introduction. *Spider Woman's Granddaughters: Traditional Tales and Contemporary Writing by Native American Women*, edited by Gunn, Fawcett Columbine, 1989, pp. 1-25.

Antone, Bob. "Reconstructing Indigenous Masculine Thought." *Indigenous Men and Masculinities: Legacies, Identities, Regeneration*, edited by Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Anderson, U of Manitoba P, 2015, pp. 21-37.

Atleo, E. Richard. *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview*. UBC Press, 2004.

Beard, Laura J. *Acts of Narrative Resistance: Women's Autobiographical Writings in the America*. U of Virginia P, 2009.

Blaeser, Kimberly M. "Native Literature: Seeking a Critical Center." *Looking at the Words of Our People*, edited by Jeannette Armstrong, Theytus, 1993, pp. 51-62.

Boyden, Joseph. *Three Day Road*. Penguin Canada. 2005.

---. *Wenjack*. Hamish Hamilton, 2016.

Carpenter, David. "Augie and Me: An Introduction." *The Education of Augie Merasty: a residential school memoir*, edited by Carpenter, U of Regina P, 2017.

Driskill, Qwo-Li. "Stolen from Our Bodies: First Nations Two-Spirits/Queers and the Journey to a Sovereign Erotic." *Introduction to Indigenous Literary Criticism in Canada*, edited by Heather Macfarlane and Armand Garnet Ruffo, Broadview P, 2016, pp. 221-233.

Dudek, Debra. "Begin with the Text: Aboriginal Literatures and Postcolonial theories." *Creating Community: A Roundtable on Canadian Aboriginal Literature*, edited by Renate Eigenbrod and Jo-Ann Episkenew, Theytus, 2002, pp. 89-108.

Eigenbrod, Renate. "A Necessary Inclusion: Native Literature in Native Studies." *Introduction to Indigenous Literary Criticism in Canada*, edited by Heather Macfarlane and Armand Garnet Ruffo, Broadview P, 2016, pp. 309-323.

---. "Not Just a Text: 'Indigenizing' the Study of Indigenous Literatures." *Creating Community: A Roundtable on Canadian Aboriginal Literature*, edited by Renate Eigenbrod and Jo-Ann Episkenew, Theytus, 2002, pp. 69-87.

---. *Travelling Knowledges: Positioning the Im/Migrant Reader of Aboriginal Literatures in Canada*. U of Manitoba P, 2005.

Emberley, Julia V. *Defamiliarizing the Aboriginal: Cultural Practices and Decolonization in Canada*. U of Toronto P, 2007.

---. *The Testimonial Uncanny: Indigenous Storytelling, Knowledge, and Reparative Practices*. SUNY Press, 2014.

Episkenew, Jo-Ann. "Socially Responsible Criticism: Aboriginal Literature, Ideology, and the Literary Canon." *Creating Community: A Roundtable on Canadian Aboriginal Literature*, edited by Renate Eigenbrod and Jo-Ann Episkenew, Theytus, 2002, pp. 51-68.

---. *Taking Back Our Spirits: Indigenous Literature, Public Policy, and Healing*. U of Manitoba P, 2009.

Fee, Margery. "Writing Orality: Interpreting Literature in English by Aboriginal Writers in North America, Australia and New Zealand." *Introduction to Indigenous Literary Criticism in Canada*, edited by Heather Macfarlane and Armand Garnet Ruffo, Broadview P, 2016, pp. 113-132.

Fontaine, Theodore. *Broken Circle: The Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools*. Heritage House, 2010.

Fred, Randy. "Foreward." *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School*, Celia Haig-Brown, Arsenal Pulp Press, 1993.

Haig-Brown, Celia. *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School*. Arsenal Pulp Press, 1993.

Hazlett, Emily. "Parents, their Children, and the State: Intimate Perspectives on Reconciliation in Porcupines and China Dolls." *ESC: English Studies in Canada*, vol. 36, no. 4, 2010, pp. 49-70. *Project Muse*, doi:101353/esc.2010.0052.

Herman, Judith. *Trauma and Recovery*. Basic Books, 1997, unityandstruggle.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Herman_Trauma-and-Recovery.pdf.

Highway, Tomson. *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*. Fifth House, 1989.

---. *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. Random House, 2005.

---. "On Native Mythology." *Introduction to Indigenous Literary Criticism in Canada*, edited by Heather Macfarlane and Armand Garnet Ruffo, Broadview P, 2016, pp. 21-24.

---. *The Rez Sisters*. Fifth House, 1988.

Horne, Dee. *Contemporary American Indian Writing: Unsettling Literature*. Peter Lang, American Indian Series, Vol 6., 2004.

Hoy, Helen. *How Should I Read These? Native Women Writers in Canada*. U of Toronto P, 2001.

---. "'Never Meant To Be': Porcupines and China Dolls as a Fetal-Alcohol Narrative." *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2012, pp. 95-112.

Hulan, Renee, editor. *Native North America: Critical and Cultural Perspectives*. ECW Press, 1999.

Hunt, Sarah. "Embodying Self-Determination: Beyond the Gender Binary." *Determinants of Indigenous Peoples' Health in Canada: Beyond the Social*, edited by Margo Greenwood, et al., Canadian Scholar's P, 2015, pp. 104-119.

Johnston, Basil. Foreward. *Magic Weapons: Aboriginal Writers Remaking Community after Residential School*, by Sam McKegney, U of Manitoba P, 2007, pp. vii-xv.

---. *Indian School Days*. U of Oklahoma P, 1989.

---. "Is That All There Is? Tribal Literature." *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature: In English*, 4th ed, edited by Daniel David Moses, et al., Oxford UP, 2013, pp. 111-119.

Justice, Daniel Heath. "'Go Away, Water!' Kinship Criticism and the Decolonization Imperative." *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective*, edited by Craig S. Womack, et al., U of Oklahoma P, 2008, pp. 147-168.

Kenny, George. *Indians Don't Cry: Gaawiin Mawisiiwag Anishinaabeg*. U of Manitoba P, 2014.

King, Thomas. Introduction. *All My Relations: An Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Native Fiction*, edited by King, McClelland & Stewart, 1991, pp. ix-xvi.

---. "Godzilla vs. Post-Colonial." *Introduction to Indigenous Literary Criticism in Canada*, edited by Heather Macfarlane and Armand Garnet Ruffo, Broadview P, 2016, pp. 37-45.

Lindbert, Tracey. *Birdie*. HarperCollins, 2015.

Maracle, Lee. *Celia's Song*. Cormorant Books, 2015.

---. "Charlie." *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature: In English*, 4th ed., edited by Daniel David Moses, et al., Oxford UP, 2013, pp. 327-332.

---. "Goodbye, Snaug." *Our Story: Aboriginal Voices on Canada's Past*. Tantoo Cardinal, et al., Doubleday, 2004, pp. 205-219.

---. *I Am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism*. Press Gang, 1996.

---. "Memory Serves." *Memory Serves: Oratories*, edited by Smaro Kamboureli, NeWest P, 2015, pp. 1-49. Writer as Critic Series XIII.

---. "Oratory: Coming to Theory." *Introduction to Indigenous Literary Criticism in Canada*, edited by Heather Macfarlane and Armand Garnet Ruffo, Broadview P, 2016, pp. 61-65.

---. *Ravensong*. Press Gang, 1993.

---. "Salmon is the Hub of Salish Memory." *Memory Serves: Oratories*, edited by Smaro Kamboureli, NeWest P, 2015, pp. 51-64. Writer as Critic Series XIII.

---. "Understanding Raven." *Memory Serves: Oratories*, edited by Smaro Kamboureli, NeWest P, 2015, pp. 85-105.

---. "Who Gets to Draw the Maps: In and Out of Place in British Columbia." *Memory Serves: Oratories*, edited by Smaro Kamboureli, NeWest P, 2015, pp. 65-84.

Marshall, Murdena, et al. "Two-Eyed Seeing in Medicine." *Determinants of Indigenous Peoples' Health in Canada: Beyond the Social*, edited by Greenwood, Margo et al., Canadian Scholars' Press, 2015, pp. 16-24.

Martin, Keavy. "Truth, Reconciliation, and Amnesia: Porcupines and China Dolls and the Canadian Conscience." *English Studies in Canada*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2009, pp. 47-65. *Project Muse*, doi:101353/esc.0.0169.

Mate, Gabor. *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction*. Vintage, 2012.

Mcfarlane, Heather and Armand Garnet Ruffo, editors. *Introduction to Indigenous Literary Criticism in Canada*, Broadview P, 2016.

Mckegney, Sam. *Magic Weapons: Aboriginal Writers Remaking Community after Residential School*. U of Manitoba P, 2007.

---. "From Trickster Poetics to Transgressive Politics: Substantiating Survivance in Tomson Highway's Kiss of the Fur Queen." *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 17, no. 4, 2005, pp. 79-113, *Project Muse*, doi:10.1353/ail.2006.0006.

---. "Warriors, Healers, Lovers and Leaders: Colonial Impositions of Indigenous Male Roles and Responsibilities." *Canadian Perspectives on Men and Masculinities: An Interdisciplinary Reader*, edited by Jason A. Laker, Oxford UP, 2011, pp. 214-265.

McLeod, Neal. "Coming Home through Stories." *Introduction to Indigenous Literary Criticism in Canada*, edited by Heather Macfarlane and Armand Garnet Ruffo, Broadview P, 2016, pp. 169-186.

Merasty, Joseph August. *The Education of Augie Merasty: a residential school memoir*. Edited by David Carpenter, U of Regina P, 2017.

Miller, J. R. *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools*." U of Toronto P, 1996.

Milloy, John S. *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986*. U of Manitoba P, 1999. Manitoba Studies in Native History XI.

Momaday, N. Scott. "The Man Made of Words." *Introduction to Indigenous Literary Criticism in Canada*, edited by Heather Macfarlane and Armand Garnet Ruffo, Broadview P, 2016, pp. 7-19.

Moses, Daniel David, et al., editors. *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature: in English*. 4th ed, Oxford UP, 2013.

Moses, Daniel David. "The Trickster's Laugh: My Meeting with Tomson and Lenore." *Introduction to Indigenous Literary Criticism in Canada*, edited by Heather Macfarlane and Armand Garnet Ruffo, Broadview P, 2016, pp. 235-239.

National Centre *for* Truth *and* Reconciliation. *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. U of Manitoba P, 2016.

Neuhaus, Mareike. *The Decolonizing Poetics of Indigenous Literatures*. U of Regina P, 2015.

Niezen, Ronald. *Truth & Indignation: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools*. U of Toronto P, 2013.

Ortiz, Simon J. Introduction. *Speaking for the Generations: Native Writers on Writing*, edited by Ortiz, U of Arizona P, 1998, pp. x-xix.

Piche, Allison. "Imprisonment and Indigenous Masculinity: Contesting Hegemonic Masculinity in a Toxic Environment." *Indigenous Men and Masculinities: Legacies, Identities, Regeneration*, edited by Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Anderson, U of Manitoba P, 2015, pp. 197-213.

Rice, Waubgeshig. *Legacy*. Theytus, 2014.

Robinson, Harry. *Write it on Your Heart: The Epic World of an Okanagan Storyteller*. Compiled and edited by Wendy Wickwire, Talon, 2004.

Ross, Rupert. *Indigenous Healing: Exploring Traditional Paths*. Penguine, 2014.

Rymhs, Deena. *From the Iron House: Imprisonment in First Nations Writing*. Wilfred Laurier UP, 2008. Aboriginal Studies Series.

Sarris, Greg. *Keeping Slug Woman Alive: A Holistic Approach to American Indian Texts*. U of California P, 1993.

Schorcht, Blanca. *Storied Voices in Native American Texts: Harry Robinson, Thomas King, James Welch and Leslie Marmon Silko*. Routledge, 2003. A Routledge Series.

Sellars, Bev. *They Called Me Number One: Secrets and Survival at an Indian Residential School*. Talonbooks, 2014.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. 2nd ed., Zed Books, 2012.

Steinhauer, Diana and James Lamouche. "*miyo-pimatisiwin* 'A Good Path.'" *Determinants of Indigenous Peoples' Health in Canada: Beyond the Social*, edited by Greenwood, Margo et al., Canadian Scholars' Press, 2015, pp. 152-162.

Trafzer, Clifford E. "Spirit and Law in Native American Narratives." *Native North America: Critical and Cultural Perspectives*, edited by Renee Hulan, ECW Press, 1999, pp. 64-82.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Volume One: Summary: Honouring the Truth, Reconciliation for the Future.* Lorimer, 2015.

Wagamese, Richard. *Indian Horse*. Douglas & McIntyre, 2012.

---. "Returning to Harmony." *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature: In English*, 4th ed, edited by Daniel David Moses, et al., Oxford UP, 2013, pp. 471-474.

Weaver, Jace. *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community*. Oxford UP, 1997.

York, Geoffrey. *The Dispossessed: Life and Death in Native Canada*. Little Brown, 1990.